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THE UNTILLED FIELD.

THE UNTILLED FIELD

BY

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Author of "Evelyn Innes," 'Sister Thérésa," "Esther Waters," etc.

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IN THE CLAY.

IN THE CLAY.

THE keen morning air excited the dog's instinct; he hunted the rats through the long grass that grew about the canal with more than usual eagerness, and Rodney watched with more than usual admiration the summer trees reflected in the still water and the white clouds showing through the branches. He thought of his work, his memory of his work was as pleasant as the morning, and he lingered until the first boat passed through the lock, and with a mind happy as the clouds he walked to his studio, thinking of Lucy's beautiful face that he had succeeded in modelling. But when he turned into the mews in which his studio was situated, he saw the woman whom he employed to light his fire standing in the middle of the roadway; he could not see her face, but she seemed like one alarmed and the doors of his studio were wide open.

He hastened his steps, and he would have run if he had not been ashamed to betray his fears to the charwoman.

"I'm afraid someone has been into the studio last night. The hasp was off the door when I came this morning. Some of the things are broken."

Rodney heard no more. He stood on the threshold looking round the wrecked studio. Three or four casts had been smashed, the floor was covered with broken plaster, and the lay figure was overthrown. Rodney saw none of these things, he only saw that his Virgin and Child was not on the modelling stool, and he hoped that the group had been stolen, anything were better than that it should have been destroyed. But the group, now a mere lump of clay, lay on the floor, and the modelling stand lay beside it.

"I cannot think," said the charwoman, "who has done this. It was a wicked thing to do. Oh, sir, they have broken this beautiful statue that you had in the Exhibition last year," and she picked up the broken fragments of a sleeping girl.

"That doesn't matter," said Rodney. "My group is gone."

"But that, sir, was only in the clay. May I be helping you to pick it up, sir? It is not broken altogether, perhaps."

Rodney waved her aside. He was pale; he could not speak, and he was trembling. He had not the courage to untie the cloths, for he knew there was nothing underneath but clay, and his manner was so strange that the charwoman was frightened. He stood like one dazed by a dream. He could not believe in reality, it was too mad, too discordant, too much like a nightmare. He had only finished the group yesterday!

He still called it his Virgin and Child, but it had never been a Virgin and Child in the sense suggested by the capital letters, for he had not yet put on the drapery that would convert a naked girl and her baby into the Virgin and Child. He had of course modelled his group in the nude first, and Harding, who had been with him the night before last, had liked it much better than anything he had done, Harding had said that he must not cover it with draperies, that he must keep it for himself, a naked girl playing with a baby, a piece of paganism. The girl's head was not modelled when Harding had seen it. It was the conventional Virgin's head, but Harding had said that he must send for his model and put his model's head upon it. He had taken Harding's advice and had sent for Lucy, and had put her pretty, quaint little head upon it. He had done a portrait of Lucy. If this terrible accident had not happened last night, the caster would have come to cast it to-morrow, and then, following Harding's advice, he would have taken a "squeeze," and when he got it back to the clay again he would have put on a conventional head, and add the conventional draperies, and make the group into the conventional Virgin and Child, suitable to Father McCabe's cathedral.

This was the last statue he would do in Ireland. He was leaving Ireland. On this point his mind was made up, and the money he was going to receive for this statue was the money that was going to take him away. He had had enough

of a country where there had never been any sculpture nor any painting, nor any architecture to signify. They were talking about reviving the Gothic, but Rodney did not believe in their resurrections or in their renaissance, or in their anything. "The Gael has had his day. The Gael is passing." So he had said the night before last to Harding; they had a long talk about the Gael, and he had told Harding that he had given up the School of Art, that he was leaving Ireland, and Harding had thought that this was an extreme step, but he had said that he did not want to die, that no one wanted to die less than he did, but he thought he would sooner die than go on teaching. He had made some reputation, and had orders that would carry him on for some years, and he was going where he could execute them, to where there were models, to where there was art, to where there was the joy of life, out of a damp, religious atmosphere in which nothing flourished but the religious vocation.

"Good Heavens! How happy I was yesterday, full of hope and happiness, my statue finished, and I going to meet Harding in Rome. The blow has fallen in the night. Who had done this? Who has destroyed my statue?"

He fell into a chair, and sat helpless, like his own lay figure, like one on whom some stupor had fallen, and he was as white as one of the casts; the charwoman had never seen anyone give way like that before, and she left the studio quietly.

In a little while he got up and mechanically kicked the broken pieces of plaster aside. The charwoman was right, they had broken his sleeping girl: that did not matter much; but the beautiful slenderness, the grace he had caught from Lucy's figure—those slendernesses, those flowing rhythms, all these were gone; the lovely knees were ugly clay. Yes, there was the ruin, the ignoble ruin, and he could not believe in it; he still hoped he would wake and find he had been dreaming, so difficult is it to believe that the living have turned to clay.

In front of him there was the cheval glass, and overcome though he was by misfortune he noticed that he was a small, pale, wiry and very dark little man, with a large bony forehead. He had seen, strangely enough, such a bumpy forehead, and such narrow eyes in a Florentine bust, and it was some satisfaction to him to see that he was the typical Italian.

"If I had lived three hundred years ago," he said, "I should have been one of Cellini's apprentices."

And yet he was the son of a Dublin builder! His father had never himself thought to draw, but he had always taken an interest in sculpture and painting, and he had said before Rodney was born that he would like to have a son a sculptor. And he waited for the little boy to show some signs of artistic aptitude. He pondered every scribble the boy made, and scribbles that any child at the same age could have done filled him with admiration. But

when Rodney was fourteen he re-modelled some leaves that had failed to please an important customer; and his father was overcome with joy, and felt that his hopes were about to be realised. For the customer, who professed a certain artistic knowledge, praised the leaves that Rodney had designed, and soon after Rodney gave a still further proof of his desire for art by telling his mother he did not care to go to Mass, that Mass depressed him and made him feel unhappy, and he had begged to be allowed to stay at home and do some modelling. His father excused his son's want of religious feeling on the ground that no one can think of two things at once, and John was now bent on doing sculpture. He had converted a little loft into a studio, and was at work there from dusk to dusk, and his father used to steal up the ladder from time to time to watch his son's progress. He used to say there was no doubt that he had been forewarned, and his wife had to admit that it did seem as if he had had some pre-vision of his son's genius: how else explain the fact that he had said he would like to have a son a sculptor three months before the child was born?

Rodney said he would like to go to the school of art, and his father kept him there for two years, though he sorely wanted him to help in the business. There was no sacrifice that the elder Rodney would not have made for his son. But Rodney knew that he could not always count upon his father's help, and one day he realized quite clearly that the only way

for him to become a sculptor was by winning scholarships. There were two waiting to be won by him, and he felt that he would have no difficulty in winning them. That year there was a scholarship for twenty-five pounds, and there was another scholarship that he might win in the following year, and he thought of nothing else but these scholarships until he had won them; then he started for Paris with fifty pounds in his pocket, and a resolve in his heart that he would live for a year and pay his fees out of this sum of money. Those were hard days, but they were likewise great days. He had been talking to Harding about those days in Paris the night before last, and he had told him of the room at the top of the house for which he paid *thirty* francs a month. There was a policeman on one side and there was a footman on the other. It was a bare little room, and he used to live principally on bread. In those days his only regret was that he had not the necessary threepence to go to the café. "One can't go to the café without threepence to pay for the harmless bock, and if one has threepence one can sit in the café discussing Carpeaux, Rodin, and the mysteries, until two in the morning, when one is at last ejected by an exhausted proprietor at the head of numerous waiters."

Rodney's resolutions were not broken; he had managed to live for nearly a year in Paris upon fifty pounds, and when he came to the end of his money he went to London in search of work. He found himself in London with two pounds, but he had got work from

a sculptor, a pupil of Dalous: "a clever man," Rodney said, "a good sculptor; it is a pity he died." At this time Garvier was in fairly good health and had plenty of orders, and besides Rodney he employed three Italian carvers, and from these Italians Rodney learned Italian, and he spent two years in London earning three pounds a week. But the time came when the sculptor had no more work for Rodney, and one day he told him that he would not require him that week, there was no work for him, nor was there the next week or the next, and Rodney kicked his heels and pondered Elgin marbles for a month. Then he got a letter from the sculptor saying he had some work for him to do; and it was a good job of work, and Rodney remained with Garvier for two months, knowing very well that his three pounds a week was precarious fortune. Some time after, the sculptor's health began to fail him and he had to leave London. Rodney received news of his death two years afterwards. He was then teaching sculpture in the art schools of Northampton, and he wondered whether, if Garvier had lived, he would have succeeded in doing better work than he had done.

From Northampton he went to Edinburgh, he wandered even as far as Inverness. From Inverness he had been called back to Dublin, and for seven years he had taught in the school of art, saving money every year, putting by a small sum of money out of the two hundred pounds that he received from Government, and all the money he got for commis-

sions. He accepted any commission, he had executed bas-reliefs from photographs. He was determined to purchase his freedom, and a sculptor requires money more than any other artist.

Rodney had always looked upon Dublin as a place to escape from. He had always desired a country where there was sunshine and sculpture. The day his father took him to the school of art he had left his father talking to the head master, and had wandered away to look at a Florentine bust, and this first glimpse of Italy had convinced him that he must go to Italy and study Michael Angelo and Donatello. Only twice had he relaxed the severity of his rule of life and spent his holidays in Italy. He had gone there with forty pounds in his pocket, and had studied art where art had grown up naturally, independent of Government grants and mechanical instruction, in a mountain town like Perugia; and his natural home had seemed to him those narrow, white streets streaked with blue shadows. "Oh, how blue the shadows are there in the morning," he had said the other night to Harding, "and the magnificent sculpture and painting! In the afternoon the sun is too hot, but at evening one stands at the walls of the town and sees sunsets folding and unfolding over Italy. I am at home amid those Southern people, and a splendid pagan life is always before one's eyes, ready to one's hand. Beautiful girls and boys," he said, "are always knocking at one's doors. Beautiful nakedness abounds. Sculpture

is native to the orange zone—the embers of the renaissance smoulder under orange trees."

He had never believed in any Celtic renaissance, and all the talk he had heard about stained glass and the revivals did not deceive him. "Let the Gael disappear," he said. "He is doing it very nicely. Do not interfere with his instinct. His instinct is to disappear in America. Since Cormac's Chapel he has built nothing but mud cabins. Since the Cross of Cong he has imported Virgins from Germany. However, if they want sculpture in this last hour I will do some for them."

And Rodney had designed several altars and had done some religious sculpture, or, as he put it to himself, he had done some sculpture on religious themes. There was no such thing as religious sculpture, and could not be. The moment art, especially sculpture, passes out of the domain of the folk tale it becomes pagan.

One of Rodney's principal patrons was a certain Father McCabe, who had begun life by making an ancient abbey ridiculous by adding a modern steeple. He had ruined two parishes by putting up churches so large that his parishioners could not afford to keep them in repair. All this was many years ago, and the current story was that a great deal of difficulty had been experienced in settling Father McCabe's debts, and that the Bishop had threatened to suspend him if he built any more. However this may be, nothing was heard of Father McCabe for fifteen years.

He retired entirely into private life, but at his Bishop's death he was heard of in the newspapers as the propounder of a scheme for the revival of Irish Romanesque. He had been to America, and had collected a large sum of money, and had got permission from his Bishop to set an example of what Ireland could do "in the line" of Cormac's Chapel.

Rodney had designed an altar for him, and he had also given Rodney a commission for a statue of the Virgin. There were no models in Dublin. There was no nakedness worth a sculptor's while. One of the two fat unfortunate women that the artists of Dublin had been living upon for the last seven years was in child, the other had gone to England, and the memory of them filled Rodney with loathing and contempt and an extraordinary eagerness for Italy. He had been on the point of telling Father McCabe that he could not undertake to do the Virgin and Child because there were no models. He had just stopped in time. He had suddenly remembered that the priest did not know that sculptors use models ; that he did not know, at all events, that a nude model would be required from which to model a Virgin, and he had replied ambiguously, making no promise to do this group before he left Ireland. "If I can get a model here I will do it," he had said to himself. "If not, the ecclesiastic will have to wait until I get to Italy."

Rodney no more believed in finding a good model in Dublin than he believed in Christianity. But the unexpected had happened. He had discovered

in Dublin the most delicious model that had ever enchanted a sculptor's eyes, and this extraordinary good fortune had happened in the simplest way. He had gone to a solicitor's office to sign an agreement for one of Father McCabe's altars, and as he came in he saw a girl rise from her typewriting machine. There was a strange idle rhythm in her walk as she crossed the office, and Rodney, as he stood watching her, divined long tapering legs and a sinuous back. He did not know what her face was like. Before she had time to turn round, Mr. Lawrence had called him into his office, and he had been let out by a private door. Rodney had been dreaming of a good model, of the true proportions and delicate articulations that in Paris and Italy are knocking at your door all day, and this was the very model he wanted for his girl feeding chickens and for his Virgin, and he thought of several other things he might do from her. But he might as well wish for a star out of heaven, for if he were to ask that girl to sit to him she would probably scream with horror; she would run to her confessor, and the clergy would be up in arms. Rodney had put the girl out of his head, and had gone on with his design for an altar. But luck had followed him for this long while, and a few days afterwards he had met the pretty clerk in a tea-room. He had not seen her face before, and he did not know who it was until she turned to go, and as she was paying for her tea at the desk he asked her if Mr. Lawrence were in town. He could see that she was pleased at being spoken to. Her

eyes were alert, and she told him that she knew he was doing altars for Father McCabe, and Father McCabe was a cousin of hers, and her father had a cheesemonger's shop, and their back windows overlooked the mews in which Rodney had his studio.

"How late you work! Sometimes your light does not go out until twelve o'clock at night."

Henceforth he met her at tea in the afternoons, and they went to the museum together, and she promised to try to get leave from her father and mother to sit to him for a bust. But she could only sit to him for an hour or two before she went to Mr. Lawrence, and Rodney said that she would be doing him an extraordinary favour if she would get up some hours earlier and sit to him from eight till ten. It was amusing to do the bust, but the bust was only a pretext. What he wanted her to do was to sit for the nude, and he could not help trying to persuade her, though he did not believe for a moment that he would succeed. He took her to the museum and he showed her the nude, and told her how great ladies sat for painters in the old times. He prepared the way very carefully, and when the bust was finished he told her suddenly that he must go to a country where he could get models. He could see she was disappointed at losing him, and he asked her if she would sit.

"You don't want a nude model for Our Blessed Lady. Do you?"

There was a look, half of hesitation, half of pleasure, and he knew that she would sit to him, and he guessed

she would have sat to him long ago if he had asked her. No doubt his long delay in asking her to sit had made her fear he did not think her figure a good one.

He had never had such a model before, not in France or in Italy, and this time he had done the best piece of work he had ever done in his life. Harding had seen it, and had said that it was the best piece that he had done. Harding had said that he would buy it from him if he got rid of the conventional head, and when Harding had left him he had lain awake all night thinking how he should model Lucy's head, and he was up and ready for her at eight, and had done the best head he had ever done in his life.

Good God! that head was now flattened out, and the child was probably thrown back over the shoulders. Nothing remained of his statue. He had not the strength to do or to think. He was like a lay figure, without strength for anything, and if he were to hear that an earthquake was shaking Dublin into ruins he would not care. "Shake the whole town into the sea," he would have said.

The charwoman had closed the door, and he did not hear Lucy until she was in the studio.

"I have come to tell you that I cannot sit again. But what has happened?"

Rodney got up, and she could see that his misfortune was greater than her's.

"Who has done this?" she said, "Your casts are all broken."

"Who, indeed, has done this?"

"Who broke them? What has happened? Tell me. They have broken the bust you did of me. And the statue of the Virgin—has anything happened to that?"

"The statue of the Virgin is a lump of clay. Oh don't look at it. I am out of my mind."

She took two or three steps forward.

"There it is," she said.

"Yes, there it is" he said. "Don't speak about it, don't touch it."

"Something may be left."

"No, nothing is left. Don't look at me that way. I tell you nothing is left. It is a lump of clay, and I cannot do it again. I feel as if I never could do a piece of sculpture again, as if I never wanted to. But what are you thinking of? You said just now that you could not sit to me again. Tell me, Lucy, and tell me quickly. I can see you know something about this. You suspect someone."

"No, I suspect no one. It is very strange."

"You were going to tell me something when you came in. You said you could not sit to me again. Why is that?"

"Because they have found out everything at home, that I sat for you, for the Virgin."

"But they don't know that—"

"Yes, they do. They know everything. Father McCabe came in last night, just after we had closed the shop. It was I who let him in, and mother

was sorry. She knew he had come to ask father for a subscription to his church. But I had said that father and mother were at home, and when I brought him upstairs and we got into the light, he stood looking at me. He had not seen me for some years, and I thought at first it was because he saw me grown up. He sat down, and began to talk to father and mother about his church, and the altars he had ordered for it, and the statues, and then he said that you were doing a statue for him, and mother said that she knew you very well, and that you sometimes came to spend an evening with us, and that I sat to you. It was then that I saw him give a start. Unfortunately, I was sitting under a lamp reading a book, and the light was full upon my face, and he had a good view of it. I could see that he recognised me at once. You must have shown him the statue. It was yesterday you changed the head."

"You had not gone an hour when he called, and I had not covered up the group. Now I am beginning to see light. He came here anxious to discuss every sort of thing with me, the Irish Romanesque, the Celtic renaissance, stained glass, the possibility of re-building another Cormac's Chapel. He sat warming his shins before the stove, and I thought he would have gone on for ever arguing about the possibility of returning to origins of art. I had to stop him, he was wasting all my day, and I brought over that table to show him my design for the altar. He said it was not large enough, and he

took hours to explain how much room the priest would require for his book and his chalice. I thought I should never have got rid of him. He wanted to know about the statue of the Virgin, and he was not satisfied when I told him it was not finished. He prowled about the studio, looking into everything. I had sent him a sketch for the Virgin and Child, and he recognised the pose as the same, and he began to argue. I told him that sculptors always used models, and that even a draped figure had to be done from the nude first, and that the drapery went on afterwards. It was foolish to tell him these things, but one is tempted to tread on their ignorance, their bigotry; all they say and do is based on hatred of life. Iconoclast and peasant! He sent some religion-besotted slave to break my statue."

"I don't think Father McCabe would have done that; he has got me into a great deal of trouble, but you are wronging him. He would not get a ruffian to break into your studio."

Rodney and Lucy stood looking at each other, and she had spoken with such conviction that he felt she might be right.

"But who else could do it except the priest? No one had any interest in having it done except the priest. He as much as told me that he would never get any pleasure from the statue now that he knew it had been done from a naked woman. He went away thinking it out. Ireland is emptying before them. By God, it must have been he. Now it all

comes back to me. He has as much as said that something of the temptation of the naked woman would transpire through the draperies. He said that. He said that it would be a very awful thing if the temptations of the flesh were to transpire through the draperies of the Virgin. From the beginning they have looked upon women as unclean things. They have hated woman. Women have to cover up their heads before they go into the churches. Everything is impure in their eyes, in their impure eyes, whereas I saw nothing in you but loveliness. He was shocked by those round tapering legs; and would have liked to curse them; and the dainty design of the hips, the beautiful little hips, and the breasts curved like shells, that I modelled so well. It is he who blasphemes. They blaspheme against Life . . . My God, what a vile thing is the religious mind. And all the love and veneration that went into that statue! There it is: only a lump of clay."

"I am sure you are wronging Father Tom; he has his faults, but he would not do such a thing as that."

"Yes," said Rodney, "he would. I know them better than you. I know the creed. But you did not finish your story. Tell me what happened when he began to suspect that you sat for the statue."

"He asked me if I had seen the statue of the Virgin in your studio. I grew red all over. I could not answer him, and mother said, 'Why don't you answer Father Tom?' I could see from his manner

that he knew I had sat for the statue. And then he said he wanted to speak to father and mother. Mother said I had read enough, that I had better go to bed."

"And you went out of the room knowing what the priest was going to say?" said Rodney, melting into sympathy for the first time. "And then?"

"I waited on the stairs for a little while, long enough to make sure that he was telling them that I had sat for the statue. I heard the door open, father came out, they talked on the landing. I fled into my room and locked the door, and just as I locked the door I heard Father say, 'My daughter! you're insulting my daughter!' You know father is suffering from stone, and mother said, 'If you don't stop I shall be up with you all night,' and so she was. All the night I heard father moaning, and to-day he is so ill the doctor is with him, and he has been taken to hospital, and mother says when he leaves the hospital he will turn me out of the house."

"Well," said Rodney, "great misfortunes have happened to us both. It was a cruel thing of the priest to tell your father that you sat for me. But to pay someone to wreck my studio!"

Lucy begged of him not to believe too easily that Father McCabe had done this. He must wait a little while, and he had better communicate with the police. They would be able to find out who had done it.

"Now," she said, "I must go."

He glanced at the rags that had once covered his statue, but he had not the courage to undo them.

If his statue had been cast the ruin would not be so irreparable. It could be put together in some sort of way.

Who could have done it but the priest? It was difficult to believe that a priest could do such a thing, that anyone could do such a thing; it was an inhuman thing to do. He might go to the police as Lucy had suggested, and the police would inquire the matter out. But would that be of any satisfaction? a wretched fine, a few days' imprisonment. Of one thing he was sure: that nowhere except in Ireland could such a thing happen. Thank God he was going! There was at least satisfaction in knowing that only twelve hours of Ireland remained. To-morrow evening he would be in Paris. He would leave the studio as it was. Maybe he might take a few busts and sketches, a few books, and a few pictures; he must take some of them with him, and he tried to formulate some plan. But he could not collect his thoughts sufficiently to think out the details. Would there be time to have a case made, or should he leave them to be sold, or should he give orders that they should be sent after him?

At that moment his eyes went towards the lump of clay, and he wished that he had asked the charwoman to take it out of his studio. He thought of it as one thinks of a corpse, and he took down a few books and tied them up with a string, and then forgot what he was doing. He and his country were two thousand years apart, and would always be two thousand years

apart, and then growing superstitious, he wondered if his country had punished him for his contempt. There was something extraordinarily fateful in the accident that had happened to him. Such an accident had never happened to anyone before. A most singular accident! He stood looking through the studio unable to go on with his packing, thinking of what Harding and he had been saying to each other. The "Celtic renaissance!" Harding believed, or was inclined to believe, that the Gael was not destined to disappear, that in making the Cross of Cong he had not got as far as he was intended to get. But even Harding had admitted that no race had taken to religion quite so seriously as the Celt. The Druids had put aside the oak leaves and put on the biretta. There had never been a religious revolution in Ireland. In the fifth and sixth centuries all the intelligence of Ireland had gone into religion. "Ireland is immersed in the religious vocation, and there can be no renaissance without a religious revolt."

The door of the studio opened. It was Lucy; and he wondered what she had come back for.

"It wasn't Father Tom. I knew it wasn't," she said.

"Do you know who it was then?"

"Yes, my brothers, Pat and Taigdh."

"Pat and Taigdh broke my statue! But what did they do that for? What did I ever do to them?"

"I saw them whispering together. I could see

they had a secret; something inspired me, and when Taigdh went out I got Pat by himself and I coaxed him and I frightened him. I told him that things had been broken in your studio, and that the police were making inquiries. I saw at once that he knew all about it. He got frightened and he told me that last night when I went to my room he and Taigdh came out of their room and listened on the stairs. They did not understand everything that was said, they only understood that I had sat for a statue, and that the priest did not wish to put it up in his church, and that perhaps he would have to pay for it, and if he did not the Bishop would suspend him—you know there has always been talk about Father Tom's debts. They got talking, and Taigdh said he would like to see the statue, and he persuaded Pat to follow him, and they climbed along the wall and dropped into the mews, and got the hasp off the door with the kitchen poker."

"But why did they break the statue?" said Rodney,

"I don't think they know why themselves. I tried to get Pat to tell me, but all he could tell me was that he had bumped against a woman with a cloak on."

"My lay figure."

"And in trying to get out of the studio they had knocked down a bust, and after they had done that Taigdh said:—'We had better have down this one. The priest does not like it, and if we have it down he won't have to pay for it.'"

"They must have heard the priest saying that he did not want the statue."

"Very likely they did, but I am sure the priest never said that he wanted the statue broken."

"Oh, it is a great muddle," said Rodney. "But there it is. My statue is broken. Two little boys have broken it. Two little boys who overheard a priest talking nonsense, and did not quite understand. I am going away to-night."

"Then I shall not see you again, . . . and you said I was a good model."

Her meaning was clear to him. He remembered how he had stood in the midst of his sculpture asking himself what a man is to do when a girl, walking with a walk at once idle and rhythmical, stops suddenly and puts her hand on his shoulder and looks up in his face. He had sworn he would not kiss her again and he had broken his oath, but the desire of her as a model had overborne every other desire. Now he was going away for ever, and his heart told him that she was as sweet a thing as he would find all the world over. But if he took her with him he would have to look after her till the end of his life. This was not his vocation. His hesitation endured but a moment, if he hesitated at all.

"You'd like to go away with me, but what should I do with you. I'm thirty-five and you're sixteen." He could see that the difference of age did not strike her—she was not looking into the remote future.

"I don't think, Lucy, your destiny is to watch me

making statues. Your destiny is a gayer one than that. You want to play the piano, don't you?"

"I should have to go to Germany to study, and I have no money. Well," she said, "I must go back now. I just came to tell you who had wrecked your studio. Good-bye. It has all been an unlucky business for both of us."

"A beautiful model," Rodney said to himself, as he watched her going up the mews. "But there are other girls just as good in Paris and in Rome." And he remembered one who had sat to him in Paris, and this gave him courage. "So it was two little boys," he said, "who wrecked my studio. Two stupid little boys; two little boys who have been taught their Catechism, and will one day aspire to the priesthood." And that it should be two stupid little boys who had broken his statue seemed significant. "Oh, the ignorance, the crass, the patent ignorance! I am going. This is no place for a sculptor to live in. It is no country for an educated man. It won't be fit for a man to live in for another hundred years. It is an unwashed country."

SOME PARISHIONERS.

SOME PARISHIONERS.

I.

THE way before Father Maguire was plain enough, yet his uncle's apathy and constitutional infirmity of purpose seemed at times to thwart him. Some two or three days ago, he had come running down from Kilmore with the news that a baby had been born out of wedlock, and Father Stafford had shown no desire that his curate should denounce the girl from the altar.

"The greatest saints," he said, "have been kind, and have found excuses for the sins of others."

And a few days later, when he told his uncle that the Salvationists had come to Kilmore, and that he had walked up the village street and slit their drum with a carving knife, his uncle had not approved of his conduct, and what had especially annoyed Father Tom was that his uncle seemed to deplore the slitting of the drum in the same way as he deplored that the Kavanaghs had a barrel of porter in every Saturday, as one of those regrettable excesses to which human nature is liable.

On being pressed he had agreed with his nephew that dancing and drinking were no preparation for the Sabbath, but he would not agree that evil could be suppressed by force. He had even hinted that too strict a rule brought about a revolt against the rule, and when Father Tom had expressed his disbelief at any revolt against the authority of the priest, Father Stafford said :—

"They may just leave you, they may just go to America."

"Then you think that it is our condemnation of sin that is driving the people to America."

"My dear Tom, you told me the other day that you met a lad and a lass walking along the roadside, and that you drove them home. You told me you were sure they were talking about things they should not talk about; you have no right to assume these things. You're asking of the people an abstinence you don't practise yourself. Sometimes your friends are women."

"Yes. But——"

Father Tom's anger prevented him from finding an adequate argument. Father Stafford pushed the tobacco bowl towards his nephew.

"You're not smoking, Tom."

"Your point is that a certain amount of vice is inherent in human nature, and that if we raise the standard of virtuous living our people will escape from us to New York or London."

"The sexes mix freely everywhere in Western

Europe; only in Ireland and Turkey is there any attempt made to separate them."

Later in the evening Father Tom insisted that the measure of responsibility was always the same.

"I should be sorry," said his uncle, "to say that those who inherit drunkenness bear the same burden of responsibility as those who come of parents who are quite sane ——"

"You cannot deny, uncle John, that free will and predestination ——"

"My dear Tom, I really must go to bed. It is after midnight."

As he walked home, Father Maguire thought of the great change he perceived in his uncle. Father Stafford liked to go to bed at eleven, the very name of St. Thomas seemed to bore him; fifteen years ago he would sit up till morning. Father Maguire remembered the theological debates, sometimes prolonged till after three o'clock, and the passionate scholiast of Maynooth seemed to him unrecognisable in the esurient Vicar-General, only occasionally interested in theology, at certain hours and when he felt particularly well. He could not reconcile the two ages, his mind not being sufficiently acute to see that after all no one can discuss theology for more than five and twenty years without wearying of the subject.

The moon was shining among the hills and the mystery of the landscape seemed to aggravate his sensibility, and he asked himself if the guardians of

the people should not fling themselves into the fore-front of the battle Men came to preach heresy in his parish—was he not justified in slitting their drum?

He had recourse to prayer, and he prayed for strength and for guidance. He had accepted the Church, and in the Church he saw only apathy, neglect, and bad administration on the part of his superiors . . . He had read that great virtues are, like large sums of money, deposited in the bank, whereas humility is like the pence, always at hand, always current. Obedience to our superiors is the sure path. He could not persuade himself that it was right for him to allow the Kavanaghs to continue a dissolute life of drinking and dancing. They were the talk of the parish; and he would have spoken against them from the altar, but his uncle had advised him not to do so. Perhaps his uncle was right; he might be right regarding the Kavanaghs. In the main he disagreed with his uncle, but in this particular instance it might be well to wait and pray that matters might improve.

Father Tom believed Ned Kavanagh to be a good boy. Ned was going to marry Mary Byrne, and Father Tom had made up this marriage. The Byrnes did not care for the marriage—they were prejudiced against Ned on account of his family. But he was not going to allow them to break off the marriage. He was sure of Ned, but in order to make quite sure he would get him to take the pledge. Next morning

when the priest had done his breakfast, the servant opened the door, and told him that Ned Kavanagh was outside, and wanted to see him.

It was a pleasure to look at this nice, clean boy, with his winning smile, and the priest thought that Mary could not wish for a better husband. The priest had done his breakfast, and was about to open his newspaper, but he wanted to see Ned Kavanagh, and he told his servant to let him in. Ned's smile seemed a little fainter than usual, and his face was paler; the priest wondered, and presently Ned told the priest that he had come to confession, and, going down on his knees, he told the priest that he had been drunk last Saturday night, and that he had come to take the pledge. He would never do any good while he was at home, and one of the reasons he gave for wishing to marry Mary Byrne was his desire to leave home. The priest asked him if matters were mending, and if his sister showed any signs of wishing to be married.

"Sorra sign," said Ned.

"That's bad news you're bringing me," said the priest, and he walked up and down the room, and they talked over Kate's wilful character.

"From the beginning she did not like living at home," said the priest.

"I don't care about living at home," said Ned.

"But for a different reason," said the priest. "You want to leave home to get married, and have a wife and children, if God is pleased to give you children."

Kate had been in numerous services, and the priest sat thinking of the stories he had heard. He had heard that Kate had come back from her last situation in a cab, wrapped up in blankets, saying she was ill. On inquiry it was found that she had only been three or four days in her situation; three weeks had to be accounted for. He had questioned her himself regarding this interval, but had not been able to get any clear and definite answer from her.

"She and mother never stop quarrelling about Pat Connex."

"It appears," said the priest, "that your mother went out with a jug of porter under her apron, and offered a sup of it to Pat Connex, who was talking with Peter M'Shane, and now he is up at your cabin every Saturday."

"That's it," said Ned.

"Mrs. Connex was here the other day, and I can tell you that if Pat marries your sister he will find himself cut off with a shilling."

"She's been agin us all the while," said Ned. "Her money has made her proud, but I don't blame her. If I had the fine house she has, maybe I would be as proud as she."

"Maybe you would," said the priest. "But what I am thinking of is your sister Kate. She will never get Pat Connex. Pat will never go against his mother."

"Well, you see he comes up and plays the melodion on Saturday night," said Ned, "and she can't stop him from doing that."

"Then you think," said the priest, "that Pat will marry your sister?"

"I don't think she wants to marry him."

"If she doesn't want to marry him, what's all this talk about?"

"She likes to meet Pat in the evenings and go for a walk with him, and she likes him to put his arm round her waist and kiss her, saving your reverence's presence."

"It is strange that you should be so unlike. You come here and ask me to speak to Mary Byrne's parents for you, and that I'll do, Ned, and it will be all right. You will make a good husband, and though you were drunk last night, you have taken the pledge to-day, and I will make a good marriage for Kate, too, if she'll listen to me."

"And who may your reverence be thinking of?"

"I'm thinking of Peter M'Shane. He gets as much as six shillings a week and his keep on Murphy's farm, and his mother has got a bit of money, and they have a nice, clean cabin. Now listen to me. There is a poultry lecture at the school house to-night. Do you think you could bring your sister with you?"

"We used to keep a great many hens at home, and Kate had the feeding of them, and now she's turned agin them, and she wants to live in town, and she even tells Pat Connex she would not marry a farmer, however much he was worth."

"But if you tell her that Pat Connex will be at the lecture, will she come?"

"Yes, your reverence, if she believes me."

"Then do as I bid you," said the priest; "you can tell her that Pat Connex will be there."

II.

AFTER leaving the priest Ned crossed over the road to avoid the publichouse. He went for a walk on the hills, and it was about five when he turned towards the village. On his way there he met his father, and Ned told him that he had been to see the priest, and that he was going to take Mary to the lecture.

Michael Kavanagh wished his son God-speed. He was very tired; and he thought it was pretty hard to come home after a long day's work to find his wife and daughter quarrelling.

"I am sorry your dinner is not ready, father, but it won't be long now. I'll cut the bacon."

"I met Ned on the road," said her father. "He has gone to fetch Mary. He is going to take her to the lecture on poultry-keeping at the schoolhouse."

"Ah, he has been to the priest, has he?" said Kate, and her mother asked her why she said that, and the wrangle began again.

Ned was the peacemaker; there was generally quiet,

in the cabin when he was there. He came in with Mary, a small, fair girl, and a good girl, who would keep his cabin tidy. His mother and sisters were broad-shouldered women with blue-black hair and red cheeks, and it was said that he had said he would like to bring a little fair hair into the family.

"We've just come in for a minute," said Mary, "Ned said that perhaps you'd be coming with us."

"All the boys in the village will be there to-night," said Ned. "You had better come with us." And pretending he wanted to get a coal of fire to light his pipe, Ned whispered to Kate as he passed her, "Pat Connex will be there."

She looked at the striped sunshade she had brought back from the dressmaker's—she had once been apprenticed to a dressmaker—but Ned said that a storm was blowing and she had better leave the sunshade behind.

The rain beat in their faces and the wind came sweeping down the mountain and made them stagger. Sometimes the road went straight on, sometimes it turned suddenly and went up-hill. After walking for a mile they came to the schoolhouse. A number of men were waiting outside, and one of the boys told them that the priest had said they were to keep a look out for the lecturer, and Ned said that he had better stay with them, that his lantern would be useful to show her the way. They went into a long, smoky room. The women had collected into one corner, and the priest was walking up and down,

his hands thrust into the pockets of his overcoat. Now he stopped in his walk to scold two children who were trying to light a peat fire in a tumbled-down grate.

"Don't be tired, go on blowing," he said. "You are the laziest child I have seen this long while."

Ned came in and blew out his lantern, but the lady he had mistaken for the lecturer was a lady who had come to live in the neighbourhood lately, and the priest said:—

"You must be very much interested in poultry, ma'am, to come out on such a night as this."

The lady stood shaking her waterpoof.

"Now, then, Lizzie, run to your mother and get the lady a chair."

And when the child came back with the chair, and the lady was seated by the fire, he said:—

"I'm thinking there will be no lecturer here to-night, and that it would be kind of you if you were to give the lecture yourself. You have read some books about poultry, I am sure?"

"Well, a little—but—"

"Oh, that doesn't matter," said the priest. "I'm sure the book you have read is full of instruction."

He walked up the room towards a group of men and told them they must cease talking, and coming back to the young woman he said:—

"We shall be much obliged if you will say a few words about poultry. Just say what you have in your mind about the different breeds."

The young woman again protested, but the priest said:—

"You will do it very nicely." And he spoke like one who is not accustomed to being disobeyed. "We will give the lecturer five minutes more."

"Is there no farmer's wife who could speak," the young lady said in a fluttering voice. "She would know much more than I. I see Biddy M'Hale there. She has done very well with her poultry."

"I daresay she has," said the priest, "but the people would pay no attention to her. She is one of themselves. It would be no amusement to them to hear her."

The young lady asked if she might have five minutes to scribble a few notes. The priest said he would wait a few minutes, but it did not matter much what she said.

"But couldn't some one dance or sing," said the young lady.

"Dancing and singing!" said the priest. "No!"

And the young lady hurriedly scribbled a few notes about fowls for laying, fowls for fattening, regular feeding, warm houses, and something about a percentage of mineral matter. She had not half finished when the priest said:—

"Now will you stand over there near the harmonium. Whom shall I announce?"

The young woman told him her name, and he led her to the harmonium and left her talking, addressing most of her instruction to Biddy

M'Hale, a long, thin, pale-faced woman, with wistful eyes.

"This wont do," said the priest, interrupting the lecturer,—"I'm not speaking to you, miss, but to my people. I don't see one of you taking notes, not even you, Biddy M'Hale, though you have made a fortune out of your hins. Didn't I tell you from the pulpit that you were to bring pencil and paper and write down all you heard. If you had known years ago all this young lady is going to tell you you would be rolling in your carriages to-day."

Then the priest asked the lecturer to go on, and the lady explained that to get hens to lay about Christmas time, when eggs fetched the best price, you must bring on your pullets early.

"You must," she said, "set your eggs in January."

"You hear that," said the priest. "Is there anyone who has got anything to say about that? Why is it that you don't set your eggs in January?"

No one answered, and the lecturer went on to tell of the advantages that would come to the poultry keeper whose eggs were hatched in December.

As she said this, the priest's eyes fell upon Biddy M'Hale, and, seeing that she was smiling, he asked her if there was any reason why eggs could not be hatched in the beginning of January.

"Now, Biddy, you must know all about this, and I insist on your telling us. We are here to learn."

Biddy did not answer.

"Then what were you smiling at?"

"I wasn't smiling, your reverence."

"Yes; I saw you smiling. Is it because you think there isn't a brooding hin in January?"

It had not occurred to the lecturer that hens might not be brooding so early in the year, and she waited anxiously. At last Biddy said:—

"Well, your reverence, it isn't because there are no hins brooding. You'ill get brooding hens at every time in the year; but, you see, you can't rear chickens earlier than March. The end of February is the earliest I have ever seen. But, of course, if you could rear them in January, all that the young lady said would be quite right. I have nothing to say agin it. I have no fault to find with anything she says, your reverence."

"Only that it can't be done," said the priest. "Well, you ought to know, Biddy."

The villagers were laughing.

"That will do," said the priest. "I don't mind your having a bit of amusement, but you're here to learn."

And as he looked round the room, quieting the villagers into silence, his eyes fell on Kate. "That's all right," he thought, and he looked for the others, and spied Pat Connex and Peter M'Shane near the door. "They're here, too," he thought. "When the lecture is over I will see them and bring them all together. Kate Kavanagh won't go home until she promises to marry Peter. I have had enough of her goings on in my parish."

But Kate had caught sight of Peter. She would get no walk home with Pat that night, and she suspected her brother of having done this for a purpose. She got up to go.

"I don't want anyone to leave this room," said the priest. "Kate Kavanagh, why are you going? Sit down till the lecture is over."

And as Kate had not strength to defy the priest she sat down, and the lecturer continued for a little while longer. The priest could see that the lecturer had said nearly all she had to say, and he had begun to wonder how the evening's amusement was to be prolonged. It would not do to let the people go home until Michael Dunne had closed his public-house, and the priest looked round the audience thinking which one he might call upon to say a few words on the subject of poultry-keeping.

From one of the back rows a voice was heard:—
"What about the pump, your reverence?"

"Well, indeed, you may ask," said the priest.

And immediately he began to speak of the wrong they had suffered by not having a pump in the village. The fact that Almighty God had endowed Kilmore with a hundred mountain streams did not release the authorities from the obligation of supplying the village with a pump. Had not the authorities put up one in the neighbouring village?

"You should come out," he said, "and fight for your rights. You should take off your coats like men, and if you do I'll see that you get

your rights," and he looked round for someone to speak.

There was a landlord among the audience, and as he was a Catholic the priest called upon him to speak. He said that he agreed with the priest in the main. They should have their pump, if they wanted a pump; if they didn't, he would suggest that they asked for something else. Farmer Byrne said he did not want a pump, and then everyone spoke his mind, and things got mixed. The Catholic landlord regretted that Father Maguire was against allowing a poultry-yard to the patients in the lunatic asylum. If, instead of supplying a pump, the Government would sell them eggs for hatching at a low price, something might be gained. If the Government would not do this, the Government might be induced to supply books on poultry free of charge. It took the Catholic landlord half an hour to express his ideas regarding the asylum, the pump, and the duties of the Government, and in this way the priest succeeded in delaying the departure of the audience till after closing time. "However fast they walk," he said to himself, "they won't get to Michael Dunne's public-house in ten minutes, and he will be shut by then." It devolved upon him to bring the evening's amusement to a close with a few remarks, and he said:

"Now, the last words I have to say to you I'll address to the women. Now listen to me. If you pay more attention to your poultry you'll never be

short of half a sovereign to lend your husbands, your sons, or your brothers."

These last words produced an approving shuffling of feet in one corner of the room, and seeing that nothing more was going to happen the villagers got up and they went out very slowly, the women curtseying and the men lifting their caps to the priest as they passed him.

He had signed to Ned and Mary that he wished to speak to them, and after he had spoken to Ned he called Kate and reminded her that he had not seen her at confession lately.

"Pat Connex and Peter M'Shane, now don't you be going. I will have a word with you presently."

And while Kate tried to find an excuse to account for her absence from confession, the priest called to Ned and Mary, who were talking at a little distance. He told them he would be waiting for them in church to-morrow, and he said he had never made a marriage that gave him more pleasure. He alluded to the fact that they had come to him. He was responsible for this match, and he accepted the responsibility gladly. His uncle, the Vicar-General, had delegated all the work of the parish to him.

"Father Stafford," he said abruptly, "will be very glad to hear of your marriage, Kate Kavanagh."

"My marriage," said Kate. . . . . "I don't think I shall ever be married."

"Now, why do you say that?" said the priest.

Kate did not know why she had said that she would

never be married. However, she had to give some reason, and she said:

"I don't think, your reverence, anyone would have me."

"You are not speaking your mind," said the priest, a little sternly. "It is said that you don't want to be married, that you like courting better."

"I'd like to be married well enough," said Kate.

"Those who wish to make safe, reliable marriages consult their parents and they consult the priest. I have made your brother's marriage for him. Why don't you come to me and ask me to make up a marriage for you?"

"I think a girl should make her own marriage, your reverence."

"And what way do you go about making up a marriage? Walking about the roads in the evening, and going into public-houses, and leaving your situations. It seems to me, Kate Kavanagh, you have been a long time making up this marriage."

"Now, Pat Connex, I've got a word with you. You're a good boy, and I know you don't mean any harm by it; but I have been hearing tales about you. You've been up to Dublin with Kate Kavanagh. Your mother came up to speak to me about this matter yesterday, and she said: 'Not a penny of my money will he ever get if he marries her,' meaning the girl before you. Your mother said: 'I've got nothing to say against her, but I've got a right to choose my own daughter-in-law.' These are your mother's very

words, Pat, so you had better listen to reason. Do you hear me, Kate?"

"I hear your reverence."

"And if you hear me, what have you got to say to that?"

"He's free to go after the girl he chooses, your reverence," said Kate.

"There's been courting enough," the priest said. "If you aren't going to be married you must give up keeping company. I see Paddy Boyle outside the door. Go home with him. Do you hear what I'm saying, Pat? Go straight home, and no stopping about the roads. Just do as I bid you; go straight home to your mother."

Pat did not move at the bidding of the priest. He stood watching Kate as if he were waiting for a sign from her, but Kate did not look at him.

"Do you hear what I'm saying to you?" said the priest.

"Yes, I hear," said Pat.

"And aren't you going?" said the priest.

Everyone was afraid Pat would raise his hand against the priest, and they looked such strong men, both of them, that everyone wondered which would get the better of the other.

"You won't go home when I tell you to do so. We will see if I can't put you out of the door then."

"If you weren't a priest," said Pat, "the devil a bit of you would put me out of the door."

"If I weren't a priest I would break every bone in your body for talking to me like that. Now out you go," he said, taking him by the collar, and he put him out.

"And now, Kate Kavanagh," said the priest, coming back from the door, "you said you didn't marry because no man would have you. Peter has been waiting for you ever since you were a girl of sixteen years old, and I may say it for him, since he doesn't say much himself, that you have nearly broken his heart."

"I'm sure I never meant it. I like Peter."

"You acted out of recklessness without knowing what you were doing."

A continual smile floated round Peter's moustache, and he looked like a man to whom rebuffs made no difference. His eyes were patient and docile; and whether it was the presence of this great and true love by her side, or whether it was the presence of the priest, Kate did not know, but a great change came over her, and she said:

"I know that Peter has been very good, that he has cared for me this long while. . . . . If he wishes to make me his wife——"

When Kate gave him her hand there was a mist in his eyes, and he stood trembling before her.

III.

NEXT morning, as Father Maguire was leaving the house, his servant handed him a letter. It was from an architect who had been down to examine the walls of the church. The envelope that Father Maguire was tearing open contained his report, and Father Maguire read that it would require £200 to make the walls secure. Father Maguire was going round to the church to marry Mary Byrne and Ned Kavanagh, and he continued to read the report until he arrived at the church. The wedding party was waiting, but the architect's report was much more important than a wedding, and he wandered round the old walls examining the cracks as he went. He could see they were crumbling, and he believed the architect was right, and that it would be better to build a new church. But to build a new church three or four thousand pounds would be required, and the architect might as well suggest that he should collect three or four millions.

And Ned and Mary noticed the dark look between the priest's eyes as he came out of the sacristy, and Ned regretted that his reverence should be out of his humour that morning, for he had spent three out of the five pounds he had saved to pay the priest for marrying him. He had cherished hopes that the

priest would understand that he had had to buy some new clothes, but the priest looked so cross that it was with difficulty he summoned courage to tell him that he had only two pounds left.

"I want two hundred pounds to make the walls of the church safe. Where is the money to come from? All the money in Kilmore goes into drink, and," he added bitterly, "into blue trousers. No, I won't marry you for two pounds. I won't marry you for less than five. I will marry you for nothing or I will marry you for five pounds," he added, and Ned looked round the wedding guests; he knew that none had five shillings in his pocket, and he did not dare to take the priest at his word and let him marry him for nothing.

Father Maguire felt that his temper had got the better of him, but it was too late to go back on what he said. Marry them for two pounds with the architect's letter in the pocket of his cassock! And if he were to accept two pounds, who would pay five to be married? If he did not stand out for his dues the marriage fee would be reduced from five pounds to one pound. . . . And if he accepted Ned's two pounds his authority would be weakened; he would not be able to get them to subscribe to have the church made safe. On the whole he thought he had done right, and his servant was of the same opinion.

"They'd have the cassock off your back, your reverence, if they could get it."

"And the architect writing to me that the walls can't be made safe under £200, and the whole lot of them earning not less than thirty shillings a week, and they can't pay the priest five pounds for marrying them."

In the course of the day he went to Dublin to see the architect; and next morning it occurred to him that he might have to go to America to get the money to build a new church, and as he sat thinking the door was opened and the servant said that Biddy M'Hale wanted to see his reverence.

She came in curtseying, and before saying a word she took ten sovereigns out of her pocket and put them upon the table. The priest thought she had heard of the architect's report, and he said—

"Now, Biddy, I am glad to see you. I suppose you have brought me this for my church. You have heard of the money it will cost to make the walls safe."

"No, your reverence, I did not hear any more than that there were cracks in the walls."

"But you have brought me this money to have the cracks mended?"

"Well, no, your reverence. I have been thinking a long time of doing something for the church, and I thought I should like to have a window put up in the church with coloured glass in it."

Father Maguire was touched by Biddy's desire to do something for the church, and he thought he would have no difficulty in persuading her. He could get

this money for the repairs, and he told her that her name would be put on the top of the subscription list.

"A subscription from Miss M'Hale—£10. A subscription from Miss M'Hale."

Biddy did not answer, and the priest could see that it would give her no pleasure whatever to subscribe to mending the walls of his church, and it annoyed him to see her sitting in his own chair stretching out her hands to take the money back. He could see that her wish to benefit the church was merely a pretext for the glorification of herself, and the priest began to argue with the old woman. But he might have spared himself the trouble of explaining that it was necessary to have a new church before you could have a window. She understood well enough it was useless to put a window up in a church that was going to fall down. But her idea still was St. Joseph in a red cloak and the Virgin in blue with a crown of gold on her head, and forgetful of everything else, she asked him whether her window in the new church should be put over the high altar, or if it should be a window lighting a side altar.

"But, my good woman, £10 will not pay for a window. You couldn't get anything to speak of in the way of a window for less than fifty pounds."

He had expected to astonish Biddy, but she did not seem astonished. She said that although fifty pounds was a great deal of money she would not mind spending all that money if she were to have her

window all to herself. She had thought at first of only putting in part of the window, a round piece at the top of the window, and she had thought that that could be bought for ten pounds. The priest could see that she had been thinking a good deal of this window, and she seemed to know more about it than he expected. "It is extraordinary," he said to himself, "how a desire of immortality persecutes these second-class souls. A desire of temporal immortality," he said, fearing he had been guilty of a heresy.

"If I could have the whole window to myself, I would give you fifty pounds, your reverence."

The priest had no idea she had saved as much money as that.

"The hins have been very good to me, your reverence, and I would like to put up the window in the new church better than in the old church."

"But I've got no money, my good woman, to build the church."

"Ah, won't your reverence go to America and get the money. Aren't our own kith and kin over there, and aren't they always willing to give us money for our churches."

The priest spoke to her about statues, and suggested that perhaps a statue would be a more permanent gift, but the old woman knew that stained glass was more permanent, and that it could be secured from breakage by means of wire netting.

"Do you know, Biddy, it will require three or four thousand pounds to build a new church. If I go to

America and do my best to get the money, how much will you help me with?"

"Does your reverence mean for the window?"

"No, Biddy, I was thinking of the church itself."

And Biddy said that she would give him five pounds to help to build the church and fifty pounds for her window, and, she added, "if the best gilding and paint costs a little more I would be sorry to see the church short."

"Well, you say, Biddy, you will give five pounds towards the church. Now, let us think how much money I could get in this parish."

He had a taste for gossip, and he liked to hear everyone's domestic details. She began by telling him she had met Kate Kavanagh on the road, and Kate had told her that there had been great dancing last night.

"But there was no wedding," said the priest.

"I only know, your reverence, what Kate Kavanagh told me. There had been great dancing last night. The supper was ordered at Michael Dunne's, and the cars were ordered, and they went to Enniskerry and back."

"But Michael Dunne would not dare to serve supper to people who were not married," said the priest.

"The supper had been ordered, and they would have to pay for it whether they ate it or not. There was a pig's head, and the cake cost eighteen shillings, and it was iced."

"Never mind the food," said the priest, "tell me what happened."

"Kate said that after coming back from Enniskerry, Michael Dunne said, 'Is this the wedding party?' and that Ned jumped off the car, and said: 'To be sure. Amn't I the wedded man.' And they had half a barrel of porter."

"Never mind the drink," said the priest, "what then?"

"There was dancing first and fighting after. Pat Connex and Peter M'Shane were both there. You know Pat plays the melodion, and he asked Peter to sing, and Peter can't sing a bit, and he was laughed at. So he grabbed a bit of stick and hit Pat on the head, and hit him badly, too. I hear the doctor had to be sent for."

"That is always the end of their dancing and drinking," said the priest. "And what happened then, what happened? After that they went home?"

"Yes, your reverence, they went home."

"Mary Byrne went home with her own people, I suppose, and Ned went back to his home."

"I don' know, your reverence, what they did."

"Well, what else did Kate Kavanagh tell you?"

"She had just left her brother and Mary, and they were going towards the Peak. That is what Kate told me when I met her on the road."

"Mary Byrne would not go to live with a man to whom she was not married. But you told me that Kate said she had just left Mary Byrne and her brother."

"Yes, they were just coming out of the cabin," said Biddy. "She passed them on the road."

"Out of whose cabin?" said the priest.

"Out of Ned's cabin. I know it must have been out of Ned's cabin, because she said she met them at the cross roads."

He questioned the old woman, but she grew less and less explicit.

"I don't like to think this of Mary Byrne, but after so much dancing and drinking, it is impossible to say what might not have happened."

"I suppose they forgot your reverence didn't marry them."

"Forgot!" said the priest. "A sin has been committed, and through my fault."

"They will come to your reverence to-morrow when they are feeling a little better."

The priest did not answer, and Biddy said :—

"Am I to take away my money, or will your reverence keep it for the stained glass window."

"The church is tumbling down, and before it is built up you want me to put up statues."

"I'd like a window as well or better."

"I've got other things to think of now."

"Your reverence is very busy. If I had known it I would not have come disturbing you. But I'll take my money with me."

"Yes, take your money," he said. "Go home quietly, and say nothing about what you have told me. I must think over what is best to be done."

Biddy hurried away gathering her shawl about her, and this great strong man who had taken Pat Connex by the collar and could have thrown him out of the schoolroom, fell on his knees and prayed that God might forgive him the avarice and anger that had caused him to refuse to marry Ned Kavanagh and Mary Byrne.

"Oh ! my God, oh ! my God," he said, "Thou knowest that it was not for myself that I wanted the money, it was to build up Thine Own House."

He remembered that his uncle had warned him again and again against the sin of anger. He had thought lightly of his uncle's counsels, and he had not practised the virtue of humility, which, as St. Teresa said, was the surest virtue to seek in this treacherous world.

"Oh, my God, give me strength to conquer anger."

The servant opened the door, but seeing the priest upon his knees, she closed it quietly, and the priest prayed that if sin had been committed he might bear the punishment.

And on rising from his knees he felt that his duty was to seek out the sinful couple. But how to speak to them of their sin? The sin was not their's. He was the original wrong-doer. If Ned Kavanagh and Mary Byrne were to die and lose their immortal souls, how could the man who had been the cause of the loss of two immortal souls save his own, and the consequences of his refusal to marry Ned Kavanagh

and Mary Byrne seemed to reach to the very ends of Eternity.

He walked to his uncle's with great swift steps, hardly seeing his parishioners as he passed them on the road.

"Is Father Stafford in?"

"Yes, your reverence."

"Uncle John, I have come to consult you."

The priest sat huddled in his arm chair over the fire, and Father Maguire noticed that his cassock was covered with snuff, and he noticed the fringe of reddish hair about the great bald head, and he noticed the fat inert hands. And he noticed these things more explicitly than he had ever noticed them before, and he wondered why he noticed them so explicitly, for his mind was intent on a matter of great spiritual importance.

"I have come to ask you," Father Tom said, "regarding the blame attaching to a priest who refuses to marry a young man and a young woman, there being no impediment of consanguinity or other."

"But have you refused to marry anyone because they couldn't pay you your dues?"

"Listen, the church is falling."

"My dear Tom, you should not have refused to marry them," he said, as soon as his soul-stricken curate had laid the matter before him.

"Nothing can justify my action in refusing to marry them," said Father Tom, "nothing. Uncle John, I know that you can extenuate, that you are

kind, but I do not see it is possible to look at it from any other side."

"My dear Tom, you are not sure they remained together; the only knowledge you have of the circumstances you obtained from that old woman, Biddy M'Hale, who cannot tell a story properly. An old gossip, who manufactures stories out of the slightest materials . . . but who sells excellent eggs; her eggs are always fresh. I had two this morning."

"Uncle John, I did not come here to be laughed at."

"I am not laughing at you, my dear Tom; but really you know very little about this matter."

"I know well enough that they remained together last night. I examined the old woman carefully, and she had just met Kate Kavanagh on the road. There can be no doubt about it," he said.

"But," said Father John, "they intended to be married; the intention was there"

"Yes, but the intention is no use. We are not living in a country where the edicts of the Council of Trent have not been promulgated."

"That's true," said Father John. "But how can I help you? What am I to do?"

"Are you feeling well enough for a walk this morning? Could you come up to Kilmore?"

"But it is two miles—I really——"

"The walk will do you good. If you do this for me, Uncle John——"

"My dear Tom, I am, as you say, not feeling very well this morning, but——"

He looked at his nephew, and seeing that he was suffering, he said—

"I know what these scruples of conscience are; they are worse than physical suffering."

But before he decided to go with his nephew to seek the sinners out, he could not help reading him a little lecture.

"I don't feel as sure as you do that a sin has been committed, but admitting that a sin has been committed, I think you ought to admit that you set your face against the pleasure of these poor people too resolutely."

"Pleasure," said Father Tom. "Drinking and dancing, hugging and kissing each other about the lanes."

"You said dancing—now, I can see no harm in it."

"There is no harm in dancing, but it leads to harm. If they only went back with their parents after the dance, but they linger in the lanes."

"It was raining the other night, and I felt sorry, and I said, 'Well, the boys and girls will have to stop at home to-night, there will be no courting to-night.' If you do not let them walk about the lanes and make their own marriages, they marry for money. These walks at eventide represent all the aspiration that may come into their lives. After they get married, the work of the world grinds all the poetry out of them."

"Walking under the moon," said Father Tom, "with their arms round each other's waists, sitting

for hours saying stupid things to each other—that isn't my idea of poetry. The Irish find poetry in other things than sex."

"Mankind," said Father John, "is the same all the world over. The Irish are not different from other races; do not think it. Woman represents all the poetry that the ordinary man is capable of appreciating."

"And what about ourselves?"

"We are different. We have put this interest aside. I have never regretted it, and you have not regretted it either."

"Celibacy has never been a trouble to me."

"But Tom, your own temperament should not prevent you from sympathy with others. You are not the whole of human nature; you should try to get a little outside yourself."

"Can one ever do this?" said Father Tom.

"Well, you see what a difficulty your narrow mindedness has brought you into."

"I know all that," said Father Tom. "It is no use insisting upon it. Now will you come with me? They must be married this morning. Will you come with me? I want you to talk to them. You are kinder than I am. You sympathise with them more than I do, and it wasn't you who refused to marry them."

Father John got out of his arm chair and staggered about the room on his short fat legs, trying to find his hat. Father Tom said—

"Here it is. You don't want your umbrella. There's no sign of rain."

"No," said his uncle, "but it will be very hot presently. My dear Tom, I can't walk fast."

"I am sorry, I didn't know I was walking fast."

"You are walking at the rate of four miles an hour at the least."

"I am sorry, I will walk slower."

At the cross roads inquiry was made, and the priests were told that the cabin Ned Kavanagh had taken was the last one.

"That's just another half mile," said Father John.

"If we don't hasten we shall be late."

"We might rest here," said Father John, "for a moment," and he leaned against a gate. "My dear Tom, it seems to me you're agitating yourself a little unnecessarily about Ned Kavanagh and his wife—I mean the girl he is going to marry."

'I am quite sure. Ned Kavanagh brought Mary back to his cabin. There can be no doubt."

"Even so," said Father John. "He may have thought he was married."

"How could he have thought he was married unless he was drunk, and that cannot be put forward as an excuse. No, my dear uncle, you are inclined for subtleties this morning."

"He may have thought he was married. Moreover, he intended to be married, and if through forgetfulness——"

"Forgetfulness!" cried Father Maguire. "A pretty large measure of forgetfulness!"

"I shouldn't say that a mortal sin has been committed; a venial one. . . . If he intended to be married——"

"Oh, my dear uncle, we shall be late, we shall be late!"

Father Stafford repressed the smile that gathered in the corner of his lips, and he remembered how Father Tom had kept him out of bed till two o'clock in the morning, talking to him about St. Thomas Aquinas.

"If they're to be married to-day we must be getting on." And Father Maguire's stride grew more impatient. "I'll walk on in front."

At last he spied a woman in a field, and she told him that the married couple had gone towards the Peak. Most of them had gone for a walk, but Pat Connex was in bed, and the doctor had to be sent for.

"I've heard," said Father Tom, "of last night's drunkenness. Half a barrel of porter; there's what remains," he said, pointing to some stains on the roadway. "They were too drunk to turn off the tap."

"I heard your reverence wouldn't marry them," the woman said.

"I am going to bring them down to the church at once."

"Well if you do," said the woman, "you won't be a penny the poorer; you will have your money at the

end of the week. And how do you do, your reverence." The woman dropped a curtsey to Father Stafford. "It's seldom we see you up here."

"They have gone towards the Peak," said Father Tom, for he saw his uncle would take advantage of the occasion to gossip. "We shall catch them up there."

"I am afraid I am not equal to it, Tom. I'd like to do this for you, but I am afraid I am not equal to another half mile up-hill."

Father Maguire strove to hypnotize his parish priest.

"Uncle John, you are called upon to make this effort. I cannot speak to these people as I should like to."

"If you spoke to them as you would like to, you would only make matters worse," said Father John.

"Very likely, I'm not in a humour to contest these things with you. But I beseech you to come with me. Come," he said, "take my arm."

They went a few hundred yards up the road, then there was another stoppage, and Father Maguire had again to exercise his power of will, and he was so successful that the last half mile of the road was accomplished almost without a stop.

At Michael Dunne's, the priests learned that the wedding party had been there, and Father Stafford called for a lemonade.

"Don't fail me now, uncle John. They are within a few hundred yards of us. I couldn't meet them without you. Think of it. If they were to tell me

that I had refused to marry them for two pounds, my authority would be gone for ever. I should have to leave the parish."

"My dear Tom, I would do it if I could, but I am completely exhausted."

At that moment sounds of voices were heard.

"Listen to them, uncle John." And the curate took the glass from Father John. "They are not as far as I thought, they are sitting under these trees. Come," he said

And they walked some twenty yards, till they came to a spot where the light came pouring through the young leaves, and all the brown leaves of last year were spotted with light. There were light shadows amid the rocks and pleasant mosses, and the sounds of leaves and water, and from the top of a rock Kate listened while Peter told her they would rebuild his house.

"The priests are after us," she said.

And she gave a low whistle, and the men and boys looked round, and seeing the priests coming, they dispersed, taking several paths, and none but Ned and Mary were left behind. Ned was dozing, Mary was sitting beside him fanning herself with her hat; they had not heard Kate's whistle, and they did not see the priests until they were by them.

"Now, Tom, don't lose your head, be quiet with them."

"Will you speak to them, or shall I?" said Father Tom.

In the excitement of the moment he forgot his own imperfections and desired to admonish them.

"I think you had better let me speak to them," said Father John. "You are Ned Kavanagh," he said, "and you are Mary Byrne, I believe. Now, I don't know you all, for I am getting an old man, and I don't often come up this way. But notwithstanding my age, and the heat of the day, I have come up, for I have heard that you have not acted as good Catholics should. I don't doubt for a moment that you intended to get married, but you have, I fear, been guilty of a great sin, and you've set a bad example."

"We were on our way to your reverence now," said Mary. "I mean to his reverence."

"Well," said Father Tom, "you are taking your time over it, lying here half asleep under the trees."

"We hadn't the money," said Mary, "it wasn't our fault."

"Didn't I say I'd marry you for nothing."

"But sure, your reverence, that's only a way of speaking."

"There's no use lingering here," said Father Tom. "Ned, you took the pledge the day before yesterday, and yesterday you were tipsy."

"I may have had a drop of drink in me, your reverence. Pat Connex passed me the mug of porter and I forgot myself."

"And once," said the priest, "you tasted the porter you thought you could go on taking it."

Ned did not answer, and the priests whispered together.

"We are half way now," said Father Tom, "we can get there before twelve o'clock."

"I don't think I'm equal to it," said Father John. "I really don't think ——"

The sounds of wheels were heard, and a peasant driving a donkey cart came up the road.

"You see it is all up-hill," said Father John. "See how the road ascends. I never could manage it."

"The road is pretty flat at the top of the hill once you get to the top of the hill, and the cart will take you to the top."

It seemed undignified to get into the donkey cart, but his nephew's conscience was at stake, and the Vicar-General got in, and Father Tom said to the unmarried couple—

"Now walk on in front of us, and step out as quickly as you can."

And on the way to the church Father Tom remembered that he had caught sight of Kate standing at the top of the rock talking to Peter M'Shane. In a few days they would come to him to be married, and he hoped that Peter and Kate's marriage would make amends for this miserable patchwork, for Ned Kavanagh and Mary Byrne's marriage was no better than patchwork.

IV.

MRS. CONNEX promised the priest to keep Pat at home out of Kate's way, and the neighbours knew it was the priest's wish that they should do all they could to help him to bring about this marriage, and everywhere Kate went she heard nothing talked of but her marriage.

The dress that Kate was to be married in was a nice grey silk. It had been bought at a rummage sale, and she was told that it suited her. But Kate had begun to feel that she was being driven into a trap. In the week before her marriage she tried to escape. She went to Dublin to look for a situation; but she did not find one. She had not seen Pat since the poultry lecture, and his neglect angered her. She did not care what became of her.

On the morning of her wedding she turned round and asked her sister if she thought she ought to marry Peter, and Julia said it would be a pity if she didn't. Six cars had been engaged, and, feeling she was done for, she went to the church, hoping it would fall down on her. Well, the priest had his way, and Kate felt she hated him and Mrs. M'Shane, who stood on the edge of the road. The fat were distributed alongside of the lean, and the bridal party

drove away, and there was a great waving of hands and Mrs. M'Shane waited until the last car was out of sight.

Her husband had been dead many years, and she lived with her son in a two-roomed cabin. She was one of those simple, kindly natures that everyone likes and that everyone despises, and she returned home like a lonely goose, waddling slowly, a little overcome by the thought of the happiness that awaited her son. There would be no more lonely evenings in the cabin; Kate would be with him now, and later on there would be some children, and she waddled home thinking of the cradle and the joy it would be to her to take her grandchildren upon her knee. When she returned to the cottage she sat down, so that she might dream over her happiness a little longer. But she had not been sitting long when she remembered there was a great deal of work to be done. The cabin would have to be cleaned from end to end, there was the supper to be cooked, and she did not pause in her work until everything was ready. At five the pig's head was on the table, and the sheep's tongues; the bread was baked; the barrel of porter had come, and she was expecting the piper every minute. As she stood with her arms akimbo looking at the table, thinking of the great evening it would be, she thought how her old friend, Annie Connex, had refused to come to Peter's wedding. Wasn't all the village saying that Kate would not have

married Peter if she had not been driven to it by the priest and by her mother.

"Poor boy," she thought "his heart is so set upon her that he has no ears for any word against her."

She could not understand why people should talk ill of a girl on her wedding day. "Why shouldn't a girl be given a chance," she asked herself. "Why should Annie Connex prevent her son from coming to the dance." If she were to go to her now and ask her if she would come? and if she would not come herself, if she would let Pat come round for an hour? If Annie would do this all the gossips would have their tongues tied. Anyhow she could try to persuade her. And she locked her door and walked up the road and knocked at Mrs. Connex's.

Prosperity in the shapes of pig styes and stables had collected round Annie's door, and Mrs. M'Shane was proud to be a visitor in such a house.

"I came round, Annie, to tell you they're married."

"Well, come in, Mary," she said, "if you have the time."

The first part of the sentence was prompted by the news that Kate was safely married and out of Pat's way; and the second half of the sentence, "if you have the time," was prompted by a wish that Mary should see that she need not come again for some time at least.

To Annie Connex the Kavanagh family was abomination. The father got 18s. a week for doing a bit of gardening. Ned had been a quarry man

now he was out of work and did odd jobs. The Kavanaghs took in a baby and they got 5s. or 6s. a week for that. Mrs. Kavanagh sold geraniums at more than their value, and she got more than the market value for her chickens—she sold them to charitable folk who were anxious to encourage poultry farming; and now Julia, the second daughter, had gone in for lace making, and she made a lace that looked as if it were cut out of paper, and sold it for three times its market value.

And to sell above market value was abominable to Annie Connex. Her idea of life was order and administration, and the village she lived in was thriftless and idle. The Kavanaghs received out-door relief; they got 2s. a week off the rates, though every Saturday evening they bought a quarter barrel of porter, and Annie Connex could not believe in the future of a country that would tolerate such a thing. If her son had married a Kavanagh her life would have come to an end, and the twenty years she had worked for him would have been wasted years. Thank God Kate was out of her son's way, and on seeing Mary she resolved that Pat should never cross the M'Shane's threshold.

Mrs. M'Shane looked round the comfortable kitchen, with sides of bacon and home-cured hams hanging from the rafters. She had not got on in life as well as Mrs. Connex, and she knew she would never have a beautiful closed range, but an open hearth, till the end of her days. She could never have

a nice dresser with a pretty carved top. The dresser in her kitchen was deal, and had no nice shining brass knobs on it. She would never have a parlour, and this parlour had in it a mahogany table and a grandfather's clock that would show you the moon on it just the same as it was in the sky, and there was a glass over the fire place. This was Annie Connex's own parlour. The parlour on the other side of the house was even better furnished, for in the summer months Mrs. Connex bedded and boarded her lodgers for one pound or one pound five shillings a week.

"So she was married to-day, and Father Maguire married her after all. I never thought he would have brought her to it. Well, I'm glad she's married." It rose to Mary's lips to say, "you are glad she didn't marry your son," but she put back the words. "It comes upon me as a bit of surprise, for sure and all I could never see her settling down in the parish."

"Them that are the wildest before marriage are often the best after, and I think it will be like that with Kate."

"I hope so," said Annie. "And there is reason why it should be like that. She must have liked Peter better than we thought; you will never get me to believe that it was the priest's will or anybody's will that brought Kate to do what she did."

"I hope she'll make my boy a good wife."

"I hope so, too," said Annie, and the women sat over the fire thinking it out.

Annie Connex wore an apron, and a black straw hat; and her eyes were young, and kind, and laughing, but Mrs. M'Shane, who had known her for twenty years, often wondered what Annie would have been like if she had not got a kind husband, and if good luck had not attended her all through life.

"We never had anyone like her before in the parish. I hear she turned round to her sister Julia, who was dressing her, and said, 'Now am I to marry him, or shall I go to America?' And she was putting on her grey dress at the time."

"She looked well in that grey dress; there was lace on the front of it, and everyone said that a handsomer girl hasn't been married in the parish for years. There isn't a man in the parish that would not be in Peter's place to-day if he only dared."

"I don't catch your meaning, Mary."

"Well, perhaps I oughtn't to have said it now that she's my own daughter, but I think many would have been a bit afraid of her after what she said to the priest three days ago."

"She did have her tongue on him. People are telling all ends of stories."

"'Tis said that Father Maguire was up at the Kavanagh's three days ago, and I heard that she hunted him. She called him a policeman, and a tax collector, and a landlord, and if she said this she said more to a priest than anyone ever said before. 'There are plenty of people in the parish,' she said, 'who believe he could turn them into rabbits if he liked.'

As for the rabbits she isn't far from the truth, though I don't take it on myself to say if it be a truth or a lie. But I know for a fact that Patsy Rogan was going to vote for the Unionist to please his landlord, but the priest had been to see his wife, who was going to be confined, and didn't he tell her that if Patsy voted for the wrong man there would be horns on the new baby, and Mrs. Rogan was so frightened that she wouldn't let her husband go when he came in that night till he had promised to vote as the priest wished."

"Patsy Rogan is an ignorant man," said Annie, "there are many like him even here."

"Ah, sure there will be always some like him. Don't we like to believe the priest can do all things."

"But Kate doesn't believe the priest can do these things. Anyhow she's married, and there will be an end to all the work that has been going on."

"That's true for you, Annie, and that's just what I came to talk to you about. I think now she's married we ought to give her a chance. Every girl ought to get her chance, and the way to put an end to all this talk about her will be for you to come round to the dance to-night."

"I don't know that I can do that. I am not friends with the Kavanaghs, though I always bid them the time of day when I meet them on the road."

"If you come in for a few minutes, or if Pat were to come in for a few minutes. If Peter and Pat aren't friends they'll be enemies."

"Maybe they'd be worse enemies if I don't keep Pat out of Kate's way. She's married Peter; but her mind is not settled yet."

"Yes, Annie, I've thought of all that; but they'll be meeting on the road, and, if they aren't friends, there will be quarrelling, and some bad deed may be done."

Annie did not answer, and, thinking to convince her, Mary said:

"You wouldn't like to see a corpse over right your window."

"It ill becomes you, Mary, to speak of corpses after the blow that Peter gave Pat with his stick at Ned Kavanagh's wedding. No; I must stand by my son, and I must keep him out of the low Irish, and he won't be safe until I get him a good wife."

"The low Irish! indeed, Annie, it ill becomes you to talk in that way of your neighbours. Is it because none of us have brass knockers on our doors? I have seen this pride growing up in you, Annie Connex, this long while. There isn't one in the village now that you've any respect for except the grocer, that black Protestant, who sits behind his counter and makes money, and knows no enjoyment in life at all."

"That's your way of looking at it; but it isn't mine. I set my face against my son marrying Kate Kavanagh, and you should have done the same."

"Something will happen to you for the cruel words you have spoken to me this day."

"Mary, you came to ask me to your son's wedding, and I had to tell you——"

"Yes, and you've told me that you won't come and that you hate the Kavanaghs, and you've said all you could against them. I should not have listened to all you said; if I did, it is because we have known each other these twenty years. Don't I remember well the rags you had on your back when you came to this village. It ill becomes——"

Mrs. M'Shane got up and went out and Annie followed her to the gate.

The sounds of wheels and hoofs were heard, and the wedding party passed by, and on the first car whom should they see but Kate sitting between Pat and Peter.

"Good-bye, Annie. I see that Pat's coming to our dance after all. I must hurry down the road to open the door to him."

And she laughed as she waddled down the road, and she could not speak for want of breath when she got to the door. They were all there, Pat and the piper and Kate and Peter and all their friends; and she could not speak, and hadn't the strength to find the key. She could only think of the black look that had come over Annie's face when she saw Pat sitting by Kate on the car. She had told Annie that she would be punished, and Mrs. M'Shane laughed as she searched for the key, thinking how quickly her punishment had come.

She searched for the key, and all the while they were telling her how they had met Pat at Michael Dunne's.

"When he saw us he tried to sneak into the yard; but I went after him. And don't you think I did right?" Kate said, as they went into the house. And when they were all inside, she said: "Now I'll get the biggest jug of porter, and one shall drink one half and the other the other."

Peter was fond of jugs, and had large and small; some were white and brown, and some were gilt, with pink flowers. At last she chose the great brown one.

"Now, Peter, you'll say something nice."

"I'll say, then," said Peter, "this is the happiest day of my life, as it should be, indeed; for haven't I got the girl that I wanted, and hasn't Pat forgiven me for the blow I struck him? For he knows well I wouldn't hurt a hair of his head. Weren't we boys together? But I had a cross drop in me at the time, and that was how it was."

Catching sight of Kate's black hair and rosy cheeks, which were all the world to him, he stopped speaking and stood looking at her, unheedful of everything; and he looked so good and foolish at that time that more than one woman thought it would be a weary thing to live with him.

"Now, Pat, you must make a speech, too," said Kate.

"I haven't any speech in me," he said. "I'm glad enough to be here; but I'm sore afraid my mother

saw me sitting on the car, and I think I had better be going home and letting you finish this marriage."

"What's that you're saying?" said Kate, "You won't go out of this house till you've danced a reel with me, and now sit down at the table next to me; and, Peter, you sit on the other side of him, so that he won't run away to his mother."

Her eyes were as bright as coals of fire, and she called to her father, who was at the end of the table, to have another slice of pig's head, and to the piper, who was having his supper in the window, to have a bit more; and then she turned to Pat, who said never a word, and laughed at him for having nothing to say.

It seemed to them as if there was no one in the room but Kate; and afterwards they remembered things. Ned remembered that Kate had seemed to put Pat out of her mind. She had stood talking to her husband, and she had said that he must dance with her, though it was no amusement to a girl to dance opposite Peter. And Mary, Ned's wife, remembered how Kate, though she had danced with Peter in the first reel, had not been able to keep her eyes from the corner where Pat sat sulking, and that, sudden-like, she had grown weary of Peter. Mary remembered she had seen a wild look pass in Kate's eyes, and that she had gone over to Pat and pulled him out.

It was a pleasure for a girl to dance opposite to Pat, so cleverly did his feet move to the tune. And everyone was admiring them when Pat cried out:

"I'm going home. I bid you all good-night; here, finish this wedding as you like."

And before anyone could stop him he had run out of the house.

"Peter, go after him," Kate said; "bring him back. It would be ill luck on our wedding night for anyone to leave us like that."

Peter went out of the door, and was away some time; but he came back without Pat.

"The night is that dark, I lost him," he said.

Then Kate did not seem to care what she said. Her black hair fell down, and she told Peter he was a fool, and that he should have run faster. Her mother said it was the porter that had been too much for her; but she said it was the priest's blessing, and this frightened everyone. But, after saying all this, she went to her husband, saying that he was very good to her, and she had no fault to find with him. But no sooner were the words out of her mouth than her mind seemed to wander, and everyone had expected her to run out of the house. But she went into the other room instead, and shut the door behind her. Everyone knew then there would be no more dancing that night; and the piper packed up his pipes. And Peter sat by the fire, and he seemed to be crying. They were all sorry to leave him like this; and, so that he might not remember what had happened, Ned drew a big jug of porter, and put it by him.

He drank a sup out of it, but seemed to forget everything, and the jug fell out of his hand.

"Never mind the pieces, Peter," his mother said. 'You can't put them together; and it would be better for you not to drink any more porter. Go to bed. There's been too much drinking this night."

"Mother, I want to know why she said I didn't run fast enough after Pat. And didn't she know that if I hit Pat so hard it was because there were knobs on his stick; and didn't I pick up his stick by mistake of my own."

"Sure, Peter, it wasn't your fault; we all know that, and Kate knows it too. Now let there be no more talking or drinking. No, Peter, you've had enough porter for to-night."

He looked round the kitchen, and seeing that Kate was not there, he said :—

"She's in the other room, I think; mother, you'll be wantin' to go to bed."

And Peter got on his feet and stumbled against the wall, and his mother had to help him towards the door.

"Is it drunk I am, mother? Will you open the door for me?"

But Mrs. M'Shane could not open the door, and she said :—

"I think she's put a bit of stick in it."

"A bit of stick in the door? And didn't she say that she didn't want to marry me? Didn't she say something about the priest's blessing?"

And then Peter was sore afraid that he would not get sight of his wife that night, and he said :—

"Won't she acquie-esh-sh?"

And Kate said :—

"No, I won't."

And then he said :—

"We were married in church—to-day, you acquie-eshed."

And she said :—

"I'll not open the door to you. You're drunk, Peter, and not fit to enter a decent woman's room."

"It isn't because I've a drop too much in me that you should have fastened the door on me; it is because you're thinking of the blow I've gave Pat. But Kate, it was because I loved you so much that I struck him. Now will you open—the door?"

"No, I'll not open the door to-night," she said. "I'm tired and want to go to sleep."

And when he said he would break open the door, she said :—

"You're too drunk, Peter, and sorra bit of good it will do you. I'll be no wife to you to-night, and that's as true as God's in heaven."

"Peter," said his mother, "don't trouble her to night. There has been too much dancing and drinking."

"It's a hard thing . . . . shut out of his wife's room."

"Peter, don't vex her to-night. Don't hammer her door any more."

"Didn't she acquie-esh? Mother, you have always been agin me. Didn't she acquie-esh?"

"Oh, Peter, why do you say I'm agin you?"

"Did you hear her say that I was drunk. If you tell me I'm drunk I'll say no more. I'll acquie-esh."

"Peter, you must go to sleep."

"Yes, go to sleep. . . . I want to go to sleep, but she won't open the door."

"Peter, never mind her."

"It isn't that I mind; I'm getting sleepy, but what I want to know, mother, before I go to bed, is if I'm drunk. Tell me I'm not drunk on my wedding night, and, though Kate—and I'll acquie-esh in all that may be put upon me."

He covered his face with his hands and his mother begged him not to cry. He became helpless, she put a blanket under his head and covered him with another blanket, and went up the ladder and lay down in the hay. She asked herself what had she done to deserve this trouble? and she cried a great deal; and the poor, hapless old woman was asleep in the morning when Peter stumbled to his feet. And, after dipping his head in a pail of water, he remembered that the horses were waiting for him in the farm. He walked off to his work, staggering a little, and as soon as he was gone Kate drew back the bolt of the door and came into the kitchen.

"I'm going, mother," she called up to the loft.

"Wait a minute, Kate," said Mrs. M'Shane, and she was half way down the ladder when Kate said:—

"I can't wait, I'm going."

She walked up the road to her mother's, and she hardly saw the fields or the mountains, though she knew she would never look upon them again. And her mother was sweeping out the house. She had the chairs out in the pathway. She had heard that the rector was coming down that afternoon, and she wanted to show him how beautifully clean she kept the cabin.

"I've come, mother, to give you this," and she took the wedding ring off her finger and threw it on the ground. "I don't want it; I shut the door on him last night, and I'm going to America to-day. You see how well the marriage that you and the priest made up together has turned out."

"Going to America," said Mrs. Kavanagh, and it suddenly occurred to her that Kate might be going to America with Pat Connex, but she did not dare to say it.

Kate stood looking at the bushes that grew between their cottage and the next one, and she remembered how she and her brother used to cut the branches of the alder to make pop guns, for the alder branches are full of sap, and when the sap is expelled there is a hole smooth as the barrel of a gun.

"I'm going," she said suddenly, "there's nothing more to say. Good-bye."

She walked away quickly, and her mother said "she's going with Pat Connex." But Kate had no thought of going to America with him. It was not until

she met him a little further on, at the cross roads, that the thought occurred to her that he might like to go to America with her. She called him, and he came to her, and he looked a nice boy, but she thought he was better in Ireland. And the country seemed far away, though she was still in it, and the people too, though she was still among them.

"I'm going to America, Pat."

"You were married yesterday."

"Yes, that was the priest's doing and mother's, and I thought they knew best. But I'm thinking one must go one's own way, and there's no judging for one's self here. That's why I'm going. You'll find some other girl, Pat."

"There's not another girl like you in the village. We're a dead and alive lot. You stood up to the priest."

"I didn't stand up to him enough. You're waiting for someone. Who are you waiting for?"

"I don't like to tell you, Kate."

She pressed him to answer her, and he told her he was waiting for the priest. His mother had said he must marry, and the priest was coming to make up a marriage for him.

"Everthing's mother's."

"That's true, Pat, and you'll give a message for me. Tell my mother-in-law that I've gone."

"She'll be asking me questions and I'll be sore set for an answer."

She looked at him steadily, but she left him without speaking, and he stood thinking.

He had had good times with her, and all such times were ended for him for ever. He was going to be married and he did not know to whom. Suddenly he remembered he had a message to deliver, and he went down to the M'Shanes' cabin.

"Ah, Mrs. M'Shane," he said, "it was a bad day for me when she married Peter. But this is a worse one, for we've both lost her."

"My poor boy will feel it sorely."

And when Peter came in for his dinner his mother said:—

"Peter, she's gone, she's gone to America, and you're well rid of her."

"Don't say that, mother, I am not well rid of her, for there's no other woman in the world for me except her that's gone. Has she gone with Pat Connex?"

"No, he said nothing about that, and it was he who brought the message."

"I've no one, mother, to blame but myself. I was drunk last night, and how could she let a drunken fellow like me into her room."

He went out to the back yard, and his mother heard him crying till it was time for him to go back to work.

V.

As he got up to go to his work he caught sight of Biddy M'Hale coming up the road; he rushed past her lest she should ask him what he was crying about, and she stood looking after him for a moment, and went into the cabin to inquire what had happened.

"Sure she wouldn't let her husband sleep with her last night," said Mrs. M'Shane, "and you'll be telling the priest that. It will be well he should know it at once."

Biddy would have liked to have heard how the wedding party had met Pat Connex on the road, and what had happened after, but the priest was expecting her, and she did not dare to keep him waiting much longer. But she was not sorry she had been delayed, for the priest only wanted to get her money to mend the walls of the old church, and she thought that her best plan would be to keep him talking about Kate and Peter. He was going to America to-morrow or the day after, and if she could keep her money till then it would be safe.

His front door was open, he was leaning over the green paling that divided his strip of garden from the road, and he looked very cross indeed.

She began at once:

"Sure, your reverence, there's terrible work going on in the village, and I had to stop to listen to Mrs.

M'Shane. Kate Kavanagh, that was, has gone to America, and she shut her door on him last night, saying he was drunk."

"What's this you're telling me?"

"If your reverence will listen to me— "

"I'm always listening to you, Biddy M'Hale. Go on with your story."

It was a long time before he fully understood what had happened, but at last all the facts seemed clear, and he said:—

"I'm expecting Pat Connex."

Then his thoughts turned to the poor husband weeping in the backyard, and he said:—

"I made up this marriage so that she might not go away with Pat Connex."

"Well, we've been saved that," said Biddy.

"Ned Kavanagh's marriage was bad enough, but this is worse. It is no marriage at all."

"Ah, your reverence, you musn't be taking it to heart. If the marriage did not turn out right it was the drink."

"Ah, the drink—the drink," said the priest, and he declared that the brewer and the distiller were the ruin of Ireland.

"That's true for you; at the same time we musnt forget that they have put up many a fine church."

"It would be impossible, I suppose, to prohibit the brewing of ale and the distillation of spirit." The priest's brother was a publican and had promised a large subscription. "And now, Biddy, what are you

going to give me to make the walls secure. I don't want you all to be killed while I am away."

"There's no fear of that, your reverence; a church never fell down on anyone."

"Even so, if it falls down when nobody's in it where are the people to hear Mass?"

"Ah, won't they be going down to hear Mass at Father Stafford's?"

"If you don't wish to give anything say so."

"Your reverence, amn't I——?"

"We don't want to hear about that window."

Biddy began to fear she would have to give him a few pounds to quiet him. But, fortunately, Pat Connex came up the road, and she thought she might escape after all.

"I hear, Pat Connex, you were dancing with Kate Kavanagh, I should say Kate M'Shane, and she went away to America this morning. Have you heard that?"

"I have, your reverence. She passed me on the road this morning."

"And you weren't thinking you might stop her?"

"Stop her," said Pat. "Who could stop Kate from doing anything she wanted to do?"

"And now your mother writes to me, Pat Connex, to ask if I will get Lennon's daughter for you."

"I see your reverence has private business with Pat Connex. I'll be going," said Biddy, and she was many yards down the road before he could say a word.

"Now, Biddy M'Hale, don't you be going." But Biddy pretended not to hear him.

"Will I be running after her," said Pat, "and bringing her back?"

"No, let her go. If she doesn't want to help to make the walls safe I'm not going to go on my knees to her. . . . You'll all have to walk to Father Stafford's to hear Mass. Have you heard your mother say what she's going to give towards the new church, Pat Connex?"

"I think she said, your reverence, she was going to send you ten pounds."

"That's very good of her," and this proof that a public and religious spirit was not yet dead in his parish softened the priest's temper, and, thinking to please him and perhaps escape a scolding, Pat began to calculate how much Biddy had saved.

"She must be worth, I'm thinking, close on one hundred pounds to-day." As the priest did not answer, he said, "I wouldn't be surprised if she was worth another fifty."

"Hardly as much as that," said the priest.

"Hadn't her aunt the house we're living in before mother came to Kilmore, and they used to have the house full of lodgers all the summer. It's true that her aunt didn't pay her any wages, but when she died she left her a hundred pounds, and she has been making money ever since."

This allusion to Biddy's poultry reminded the priest that he had once asked Biddy what had put the idea

of a poultry farm into her head, and she had told him that when she was taking up the lodgers' meals at her aunt's she used to have to stop and lean against the banisters, so heavy were the trays.

"One day I slipped and hurt myself, and I was lying on my back for more than two years, and all the time I could see the fowls pecking in the yard, for my bed was by the window. I thought I would like to keep fowls when I was older."

The priest remembered the old woman standing before him telling him of her accident, and while listening he had watched her, undecided whether she could be called a hunchback. Her shoulders were higher than shoulders usually are, she was jerked forward from the waist, and she had the long, thin arms, and the long, thin face, and the pathetic eyes of the hunchback. Perhaps she guessed his thoughts. She said:—

"In those days we used to go blackberrying with the boys. We used to run all over the hills."

He did not think she had said anything else, but she had said the words in such a way that they suggested a great deal—they suggested that she had once been very happy, and that she had suffered very soon the loss of all her woman's hopes. A few weeks, a few months, between her convalescence and her disappointment had been all her woman's life. The thought that life is but a little thing passed across the priest's mind, and then he looked at Pat Connex and wondered what was to be done with him. His con-

duct at the wedding would have to be inquired into and the marriage that was being arranged would have to be broken off if Kate's flight could be attributed to him.

"Now, Pat Connex, we will go to Mrs. M'Shane. I shall want to hear her story."

"Sure what story can she tell of me? Didn't I run out of the house away from Kate when I saw what she was thinking of? What more could I do?"

"If Mrs. M'Shane tells the same story as you do we'll go to your mother's, and afterwards I'll go to see Lennon about his daughter."

Pat's dancing with Kate and Kate's flight to America had reached Lennon's ears, and it did not seem at all likely that he would consent to give his daughter to Pat Connex, unless, indeed, Pat Connex agreed to take a much smaller dowry than his mother had asked for.

These new negotiations, his packing, a letter to the Bishop, and the payment of bills, fully occupied the last two days, and the priest did not see Biddy again till he was on his way to the station. She was walking up and down her poultry-yard, telling her beads, followed by her poultry; and it was with difficulty that he resisted the impulse to ask her for a subscription, but the driver said if they stopped they would miss the train.

"Very well," said the priest, and he drove past her cabin without speaking to her.

In the bar-rooms of New York, while trying to induce a recalcitrant loafer to part with a dollar, he remembered that he had not met anyone so stubborn as Biddy. She had given very little, and yet she seemed to be curiously mixed up with the building of the church. She was the last person he saw on his way out, and, a few months later, he was struck by the fact that she was the first parishioner he saw on his return. As he was driving home from the station in the early morning whom should he see but Biddy, telling her beads, followed by her poultry. The scene was the same except that morning was substituted for evening. This was the first impression. On looking closer he noticed that she was not followed by as many Plymouth Rocks as on the last occasion. "She seems to be going in for Buff Orpingtons," he said to himself.

"It's a fine thing to see you again, and your reverence is looking well. I hope you've been lucky in America?"

"I have brought home some money anyhow, and the church will be built, and you will tell your beads under your window one of these days."

"Your reverence is very good to me, and God is very good."

And she stood looking after him, thinking how she had brought him round to her way of thinking. She had always known that the Americans would pay for the building, but no one else but herself would be thinking of putting up a beautiful window

that would do honour to God and Kilmore. And it wasn't her fault if she didn't know a good window from a bad one, as well as the best of them. And it wasn't she who was going to hand over her money to the priest or his architect to put up what window they liked. She had been inside every church within twenty miles of Kilmore, and would see that she got full value for her money.

At the end of the week she called at the priest's house to tell him the pictures she would like to see in the window, and the colours. But the priest's servant was not certain whether Biddy could see his reverence.

"He has a gentleman with him."

"Isn't it the architect he has with him? Don't you know it is I who am putting up the window?"

"To be sure," said the priest; "show her in." And he drew forward a chair for Miss M'Hale, and introduced her to the architect. The little man laid his pencil aside, and this encouraged Biddy, and she began to tell him of the kind of window she had been thinking of. But she had not told him half the things she wished to have put into the window when he interrupted her, and said there would be plenty of time to consider what kind of window should be put in when the walls were finished and the roof was upon them.

"Perhaps it is a little premature to discuss the window, but you shall choose the subjects you would like to see represented in the window, and as for the

colours, the architect and designer will advise you But I am sorry to say, Biddy, that this gentleman says that the four thousand pounds the Americans were good enough to give me will not do much more than build the walls."

"They're waiting for me to offer them my money, but I won't say a word," Biddy said to herself; and she sat fidgetting with her shawl, coughing from time to time, until the priest lost his patience.

"Well, Biddy, we're very busy here, and I'm sure you want to get back to your fowls. When the church is finished we'll see if we want your window."

The priest had hoped to frighten her, but she was not the least frightened. Her faith in her money was abundant; she knew that as long as she had her money the priest would come to her for it on one pretext or another, sooner or later. And she was as well pleased that nothing should be settled at present, for she was not quite decided whether she would like to see Christ sitting in judgment, or Christ crowning His Virgin Mother; and during the next six months she pondered on the pictures and the colours, and gradually the design grew clearer.

And every morning, as soon as she had fed her chickens, she went up to Kilmore to watch the workmen. She was there when the first spadeful of earth was thrown up, and as soon as the walls showed above the ground she began to ask the workmen how long it would take them to reach the windows, and if a workman put down his trowel and wandered from

his work she would tell him it was God he was cheating; and later on, when the priest's money began to come to an end and he could not pay the workmen full wages, she told them they were working for God's Own House, and that He would reward them in the next world.

"Hold your tongue," said a mason. "If you want the church built why don't you give the priest the money you're saving, and let him pay us?"

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, Pat Murphy. It isn't for myself I am keeping it back. Isn't it all going to be spent?"

The walls were now built, and amid the clatter of the slaters' hammers Biddy began to tell the plasterers of the beautiful pictures that would be seen in her window; and she gabbled on, mixing up her memories of the different windows she had seen, until at last her chatter grew wearisome, and they threw bits of mortar, laughing at her for a crazy old woman, or the priest would suddenly come upon them, and they would scatter in all directions, leaving him with Biddy.

"What were they saying to you, Biddy?"

"They were saying, your reverence, that America is a great place."

"You spend a great deal of your time here, Biddy, and I suppose you are beginning to see that it takes a long time to build a church. Now you are not listening to what I am saying. You are thinking about your window; but you must have a house before you can have a window."

"I know that very well, your reverence; but, you see, God has given us the house."

"God's House consists of little more than walls and a roof."

"Indeed it does, your reverence; and amn't I saving up all my money for the window."

"But, my good Biddy, there is hardly any plastering done yet. The laths have come in, and there isn't sufficient to fill that end of the church, and I have no more money."

"Won't your reverence be getting the rest of the money in America? And I am thinking a bazaar would be a good thing. Wouldn't we all be making scapulars, and your reverence might get medals that the Pope had blessed."

Eventually he drove her out of the church with his umbrella. But as his anger cooled he began to think that perhaps Biddy was right—a bazaar might be a good thing, and a distribution of medals and scapulars might induce his workmen to do some overtime. He went to Dublin to talk over this matter with some pious Catholics, and an old lady wrote a cheque for fifty pounds, two or three others subscribed smaller sums, and the plasterers were busy all next week. But these subscriptions did not go nearly as far towards completing the work as he had expected. The architect had led him astray, and he looked round the vast barn that he had built and despaired. It seemed to him it would never be finished in his lifetime. A few weeks after he was again running short of money, and

he was speaking to his workmen one Saturday afternoon, telling them how they could obtain a plenary indulgence by subscribing so much towards the building of the church, and by going to Confession and Communion on the first Sunday of the month, and if they could not afford the money they could give their work. He was telling them how much could be done if every workman were to do each day an hour of overtime, when Biddy suddenly appeared, and, standing in front of the men, she raised up her hands and said that they should not pass her until they had pledged themselves to come to work on Monday.

"But haven't we got our wives and little ones, and haven't we to think of them?" said a workman.

"Ah, one can live on very little when one is doing the work of God," said Biddy.

The man called her a vain old woman, who was starving herself so that she might put up a window, and they pushed her aside and went away, saying they had to think of their wives and children.

The priest turned upon her angrily and asked her what she meant by interfering between him and his workmen.

"Now don't be angry with me, your reverence. I will say a prayer, and you will say a word or two in your sermon to-morrow."

And he spoke in his sermon of the disgrace it would be to Kilmore if the church remained unfinished. The news would go over to America,

and what priest would be ever able to get money there again to build a church?

"Do you think a priest likes to go about the bar-rooms asking for dollars and half-dollars? Would you make his task more unpleasant? If I have to go to America again, what answer shall I make if they say to me:—'Well, didn't your workmen leave you at Kilmore? They don't want churches at Kilmore. Why should we give you money for a church?'"

There was a great deal of talking that night in Michael Dunne's, and they were all of one mind, that it would be a disgrace to Kilmore if the church were not finished; but no one could see that he could work for less wages than he was in the habit of getting. As the evening wore on the question of indulgences was raised, and Ned Kavanagh said:—

"The devil a bit of use going against the priest, and the indulgences will do us no harm."

"The devil a bit, but maybe a great deal of good," said Peter M'Shane, and an hour later they were staggering down the road swearing they would stand by the priest till the death.

But on Monday morning nearly all were in their beds; only half a dozen came to the work, and the priest sent them away, except one plasterer. There was one plasterer who, he thought, could stand on the scaffold.

"If I were to fall I'd go straight to Heaven," the plasterer said, and he stood so near the edge, and his

knees seemed so weak under him, that Biddy thought he was going to fall.

"It would be better for you to finish what you are doing; the Holy Virgin will be more thankful to you."

"Aye, maybe she would," he said, and he continued his work mechanically.

He was working at the clustered columns about the window Biddy had chosen for her stained glass and she did not take her eyes off him. The priest returned a little before twelve o'clock, as the plasterer was going to his dinner, and he asked him if he were feeling better.

"I'm all right, your reverence, and it won't occur again."

"I hope he won't go down to Michael Dunne's during his dinner hour," he said to Biddy. "If you see any further sign of drink upon him when he comes back you must tell me."

"He is safe enough, your reverence. Wasn't he telling me while your reverence was having your breakfast that if he fell down he would go straight to Heaven, and he opened his shirt and showed me he was wearing the scapular of the Holy Virgin."

And Biddy began to advocate a sale of scapulars.

"A sale of scapulars will not finish my church. You're all a miserly lot here, you want everything done for you."

"Weren't you telling me, your reverence, that a pious lady in Dublin —"

"The work is at a stand-still. If I were to go to America to-morrow it would be no use unless I could tell them it was progressing."

"Sure they don't ask any questions in America, they just give their money."

"If they do, that's more than you're doing at home. I want to know, Biddy, what you are going to do for this church. You're always talking about it; you're always here and you have given less than any one else."

"Didn't I offer your reverence a sovereign once since I gave you the five pounds."

"You don't seem to understand, Biddy, that you can't put up your window until the plastering is finished."

"I think I understand that well enough, but the church will be finished."

"How will it be finished? When will it be finished?"

She did not answer, and nothing was heard in the still church but her irritating little cough.

"You're very obstinate. Well, tell me where you would like to have your window."

"It is there I shall be kneeling, and if you will let me put my window there I shall see it when I look up from my beads. I should like to see the Virgin and I should like to see St. John with her. And don't you think, your reverence, we might have St. Joseph as well. Our Lord would have to be in the Virgin's arms, and I think, your reverence, I would

like Our Lord coming down to judge us, and I should like to have Him on His throne on the day of Judgment up at the top of the window."

"I can see you've been thinking a good deal about this window," the priest said.

She began again, and the priest heard the names of the different saints she would like to see in stained glass, and he let her prattle on. But his temper boiled up suddenly, and he said:—

"You'd go on like this till midnight if I let you. Now, Biddy McHale, you've been here all the morning delaying my workman. Go home to your fowls."

And she ran away shrinking like a dog, and the priest walked up and down the unfinished church. "She tries my temper more than anyone I ever met," he said to himself. At that moment he heard some loose boards clanking, and, thinking it was the old woman coming back, he looked round, his eyes flaming. But the intruder was a short and square-set man, of the type that one sees in Germany, and he introduced himself as an agent of a firm of stained glass manufacturers. He told Father Maguire they had heard in Germany of the beautiful church he was building. "I met an old woman on the road, and she told me that I would find you in the church considering the best place for the window she was going to put up. She looks very poor."

"She's not as poor as she looks; she's been saving money all her life for this window. Her window is

her one idea, and, like people of one idea, she's apt to become a little tiresome."

"I don't quite understand."

He began telling the story, and seeing that the German was interested in the old woman he began to acquire an interest in her himself, an unpremeditated interest; he had not suspected that Biddy was so interesting. The German said she reminded him of the quaint sculpture of Nuremburg, and her character reminded him of one of the German saints, and talking of Biddy and mediævalism and Gothic art and stained glass the priest and the agent for the manufacture of stained glass in Munich walked up and down the unfinished church until the return of the plasterer reminded the priest of his embarrassments, and he took the German into his confidence.

"These embarrassments always occur," said the agent, "but there is no such thing as an unfinished church in Ireland; if you were to let her put up the window subscriptions would pour in."

"How is that?"

"A paragraph in the newspaper describing the window, the gift of a local saint. I think you told me her name was M'Hale, and that she lives in the village."

"Yes, you pass her house on the way to the station."

The German took his leave abruptly, and when he was half-way down the hill he asked some children to direct him.

"Is it Biddy M'Hale, that has all the hins, and is going to put up a window in the church, that you're wanting?"

The German said that that was the woman he wanted, and the eldest child said :—

"You will see her feeding her chickens, and you must call to her over the hedge."

And he did as he was bidden.

"Madam . . . the priest has sent me to show you some designs for a stained glass window."

No one had ever addressed Biddy as Madam before. She hastened to let him into the house, and wiped the table clean so that he could spread the designs upon it. The first designs he showed her were the four Evangelists, but he would like a woman's present to her church to be in a somewhat lighter style, and he showed her a picture of St. Cecilia that fascinated her for a time; and then he suggested that a group of figures would look handsomer than a single figure. But she could not put aside the idea of the window that had grown up in her mind, and after some attempts to persuade her to accept a design they had in stock he had to give way and listen.

At the top of the picture, where the window narrowed to a point, Our Lord sat dressed in white on a throne, placing a golden crown on the head of the Virgin kneeling before him. About him were the women who had loved him, and the old woman said she was sorry she was not a nun, and hoped that

Christ would not think less of her. As far as mortal sin was concerned she could say she had never committed one. At the bottom of the window there were suffering souls. The cauldrons that Biddy wished to see them in, the agent said, would be difficult to introduce—the suffering of the souls could be artistically indicated by flames.

"I shall have great joy," she said, "seeing the blessed women standing about Our Divine Lord, singing hymns in his praise, and the sight of sinners broiling will make me be sorrowful."

She insisted on telling the German of the different churches she had visited, and the windows she had seen, and she did not notice that he was turning over his designs and referring to his note book while she was talking. Suddenly he said:—

"Excuse me, but I think we have got the greater part of the window you wish for in stock, and the rest can be easily made up. Now the only question that remains is the question of the colours you care about."

"I've always thought there's no colour like blue. I'd like the Virgin to wear a blue cloak."

She did not know why she had chosen that colour, but the agent told her that she was quite right; blue signified chastity; and when the German had gone she sat thinking of the Virgin and her cloak. The Minorcas, and Buff Orpingtons, and Plymouth Rocks came through the door cackling, and while feeding them she sat, her eyes fixed on the beautiful

evening sky, wondering if the blue in the picture would be as pale, or if it would be a deeper blue.

She remembered suddenly that she used to wear a blue ribbon when she went black-berrying among the hills; she found it in an old box and tied it round her neck. The moment she put it on her memory was as if lighted up with memories of the saints and the miracles they had performed, and she went to Father Maguire to tell him of the miracle. That the agent should have in stock the very window she had imagined seemed a miracle, and she was encouraged to think some miraculous thing had happened when the priest asked her to tell him exactly what her window was like. She had often told him before but he had never listened to her But now he recognised her window as an adaptation of Fra Angelico's picture, and he told her how the saint had wandered from monastery to monastery painting pictures on the walls. More he could not tell her, but he promised to procure a small biography of the saint. She received the book a few days after, and as she turned over the leaves she heard the children coming home from school, and she took the book out to them, for her sight was failing, and they read bits of it aloud, and she frightened them by dropping on her knees and crying out that God had been very good to her.

She wandered over the country visiting churches, returning to Kilmore suddenly. She was seen as usual at sunrise and at sunset feeding her poultry,

and then she went away again, and the next time she was heard of was in a church near Dublin celebrated for its stained glass. A few days after Ned Kavanagh met her hurrying up the road from the station, and she told him she had just received a letter from the Munich agent saying he had forwarded her window. It was to arrive to-morrow.

It was expected some time about mid-day, but Biddy's patience was exhausted long before, and she walked a great part of the way to Dublin to meet the dray. She returned with it, walking with the dray men, but within three miles of Kilmore she was so tired that they had to put her on the top of the boxes, and a cheer went up from the villagers when she was lifted down. She called to the workmen to be careful in unpacking the glass; and when they were putting it up she went down on her knees and prayed that no accident might happen.

At sunset the church had to be closed, and it was with difficulty she was persuaded to leave it. Next morning at sunrise she was knocking at the door of the woman who was charged with the cleaning of the church, asking for the key.

And from that day she was hardly ever out of the church; the charwoman began to complain that she could not get on with her work, and she was telling the priest that Biddy was always at her elbow, asking her to come to her window, saying she would show her things she had not seen before, when their conversation was interrupted by Biddy. She seemed

a little astray, a little exalted, and Father Maguire watched her as she knelt with up-lifted face, telling her beads. He noticed that her fingers very soon ceased to move; and that she held the same bead a long time between her fingers. Minutes passed, but her lips did not move; her eyes were fixed on the panes and her look was so enraptured that he began to wonder if Paradise were being revealed to her.

And while the priest wondered, Biddy listened to music inconceivably tender. She had been awakened from her prayers by the sound of a harp string touched very gently; and the note had floated down like a flower, and all the vibrations were not dead when the same note floated down the aisles once more. Biddy listened, anxious to hear it a third time. Once more she heard it, and the third time she saw the saint's fingers moving over the strings; and she played a little tune of six notes. And it was at the end of the second playing of the tune that the priest touched Biddy on the shoulder. She looked up and it was a long while before she saw him, and she was greatly grieved that she had been awakened from her dream. She said it was a dream, because her happiness had been so great; and she stood looking at the priest, fain, but unable, to tell how she had been borne beyond her usual life, that her whole being had answered to the music the saint played, and looking at him, she wondered what would have happened if he had not awakened her.

Next day was Sunday, and she was in the church at sunrise listening for the music. But she heard and saw nothing until the priest had reached the middle of the Mass. The acolyte had rung the bell to prepare the people for the Elevation, and it was then that she heard a faint low sound that the light wire emitted when the saint touched her harp, and she noticed that it was the same saint that had played yesterday, the tall saint with the long fair hair who stood apart from the others, looking more intently at Our Blessed Lord than the others. She touched her harp again and the note vibrated for a long while, and when the last vibrations died she touched the string again. The note was sweet and languid and intense, and it pierced to the very core of Biddy. The saint's hand passed over the strings, producing faint exquisite sounds, so faint that Biddy felt no surprise they were not heard by anyone else; it was only by listening intently that she could hear them. Yesterday's little tune appeared again a little tune of six notes, and it seemed to Biddy even more exquisite than it had seemed when she first heard it. The only difference between to-day and yesterday was, that to-day all the saints struck their harps, and after playing for some time the music grew white like snow and remote as star-fire, and yet Biddy heard it more clearly than she had heard anything before, and she saw Our Lord more clearly than she had ever seen anybody else. She saw Him look up when He had placed the

crown on His Mother's head; she heard Him sing a few notes, and then the saints began to sing. The window filled up with song and colour, and all along the window there was a continual transmutation of colour and song. The figures grew taller, and they breathed extraordinary life. It sang like a song within them, and it flowed about them and out of them in a sort of pearl-coloured mist. The vision clove the church along and across, and through it she could see the priest saying his Mass, and when he raised the Host above his head, Biddy saw Our Lord look at her, and His eyes brightened as if with love of her. He seemed to have forgotten the saints that sang His praises so beautifully, and when He bent towards her and she felt His presence about her, she cried out

"He is coming to take me in His arms!"

And it was then that Biddy fell out of her place and lay at length on the floor of the church, pale as a dead woman. The clerk went to her, but he could not carry her out; she lay rigid as one who had been dead a long while, and she muttered "He is coming to put the gold crown on my head." The clerk moved away, and she swooned again.

Her return to her ordinary perceptions was slow and painful. The people had left long ago, and she tottered out of the empty church and followed the road to her cabin without seeing it or the people whom she met on the road. At last a woman took her by the arm and led her into her cabin, and spoke

to her. She could not answer at first, but she awoke gradually, and she began to remember that she had heard music in the window and that Our Lord had sung to her. The neighbour left her babbling. She began to feed her chickens, and was glad when she had fed them. She wanted to think of the great and wonderful sights she had seen. She could not particularize, preferring to remember her vision as a whole, unwilling to separate the music from the colour, or the colour and the music from the adoration of the saints.

As the days went by her life seemed to pass more and more out of the life of the ordinary day. She seemed to live, as it were, on the last verge of human life; the mortal and the immortal mingled; she felt she had been always conscious of the immortal, and that nothing had happened except the withdrawing of a veil. The memory of her vision was still intense in her, but she wished to renew it; and waited next Sunday breathless with anticipation. The vision began at the same moment, the signal was the same as before; the note from the harp string floated down the aisles and when it had been repeated three times the saintly fingers moved over the strings, and she heard the beautiful little tune.

Every eye was upon her, and forgetful of the fact that the priest was celebrating Mass, they said "Look, she hears the saints singing about her. She sees Christ coming." The priest heard Biddy cry out "Christ is coming," and she fell prone and none dared

to raise her up, and she lay there till the Mass was finished. When the priest left the altar she was still lying at length, and the people were about her; and knowing how much she would feel the slightest reproof, he did not say a word that would throw doubt on her statement. He did not like to impugn a popular belief, but he felt himself obliged to exercise clerical control.

"Now Biddy, I know you are a very pious woman, but I cannot allow you to interrupt the Mass."

"If the Lord comes to me am I not to receive Him, your reverence?"

"In the first place I object to your dress; you are not properly dressed."

She wore a bright blue cloak, she seemed to wear hardly anything else, and tresses of dirty hair hung over her shoulders.

"The Lord has not said anything to me about my dress, your reverence, and He put His gold crown on my head to-day."

"Biddy, is all this true?"

"As true as you're standing there."

"I am not asking you if your visions are true I have my opinion about that. I am asking if they are true to you."

"True to me, your reverence? I don't rightly understand."

"I want to know if you think Our Lord put a gold crown on your head to-day."

"To be sure He did, your reverence."

"If He did, where is it?"

"Where is it, your reverence? It is with Him, to be sure. He wouldn't be leaving it on my head and me walking about the parish—that would not be reasonable at all, I am thinking. He doesn't want me to be robbed."

"There is no one in the parish who would rob you."

"Maybe some one would come out of another parish, if I was walking about with a gold crown on my head. And such a crown as He put upon it!—I am sorry you did not see it, but your reverence was saying the holy Mass at the time."

And she fell on her knees and clung to his cassock.

"And you saw the crown, Biddy?"

"I had it on my head, your reverence."

"And you heard the saints singing."

"Yes, and I will tell you what they were singing," and she began crooning. "Something like that your reverence. You don't believe me, but we have only our ears and our eyes to guide us."

"I don't say I don't believe you, Biddy, but you may be deceived."

"Sorra deceiving, your reverence, or I've been deceived all my life. And now, your reverence, if you have no more business with me I will go, for they are waiting in the chapel yard to hear me tell them about the crown that was put upon my head."

"Well, Biddy, I want you to understand that I cannot have you interrupting the Mass. I cannot

permit it. The visions may be true, or not true, but you must not interrupt the Mass. Do you hear me?"

The acolyte had opened the door of the sacristy, she slipped through it, and the priest took off his cassock. As he did so, he noticed that the acolytes were anxious to get out; they were at the window watching, and when the priest looked out of the window he saw the people gathered about Biddy and could see she had obtained an extraordinary hold on the popular imagination; no one noticed him when he came out of the sacristy; they were listening to Biddy, and he stood unnoticed amid the crowd for a few minutes.

"She's out of her mind," he said. "She's as good as mad. What did she tell me—that Our Lord put a crown on her head."

It was difficult to know what to do. News of her piety had reached Dublin. People had been down to Kilmore to see her and had given subscriptions, and he understood that Biddy had enabled him to furnish his church with varnished pews and holy pictures. A pious Catholic lady had sent him two fine statues of Our Lady and St. Joseph. St. Joseph was in a purple cloak and Our Lady wore a blue cloak, and there were gold stars upon it. He had placed these two statues on the two side altars. But there were many things he wanted for his church, and he could only get them through Biddy. It was, therefore, his interest to let her remain in Kilmore, only she could not be allowed to interrupt the Mass, and he felt that he must be

allowed to pass in and out of his church without having to put up with extravagant salutations.

He was going home to his breakfast, and a young man extremely interested in ecclesiastical art was coming to breakfast with him. The young man had a great deal to say about Walter Pater and Chartres Cathedral, and Father Maguire feared he was cutting but a very poor figure in the eyes of this young man, for he could not keep his thoughts on what the young man was saying, he was thinking of Biddy; he hardly thought of anything else now; she was absorbing the mind of his entire parish, she interrupted the Mass, he could not go into his church without being accosted by this absurd old woman, and this young man, a highly cultivated young man, who had just come from Italy and who took the highest interest in architecture would not be able to see his church in peace. As soon as they entered it they would be accosted by this old woman; she would follow them about asking them to look at her window, telling them her visions, which might or might not be true. She had a knack of hiding herself—he often came upon her suddenly behind the pillars, and sometimes he found her in the confessional. As soon as he crossed the threshold he began to look for her, and not finding her in any likely place, his fears subsided, and he called the young man's attention to the altar that had been specially designed for his church. And the young man had begun to tell the priest of the altars he had seen that

spring in Italy, when suddenly he uttered a cry ; he suddenly felt a hand upon his shoulder.

"Your honour will be well rewarded if you will come to my window. Now why should I tell you a lie, your reverence?"

She threw herself at the priest's feet and besought him to believe that the saints had been with her, and that every word she was speaking was the truth.

"Biddy, if you don't go away at once I will not allow you inside the church to-morrow."

The young man looked at the priest, surprised at his sternness, and the priest said :—

"She has become a great trial to us at Kilmore. Come aside and I will tell you about her."

And when the priest had told the young man about the window the young man asked if Biddy would have to be sent away.

"I hope not, for if she were separated from her window she would certainly die. It came out of her savings, out of the money she made out of chickens."

"And what has become of the chickens?"

"She has forgotten all about them ; they wandered away or died. She has been evicted, and she lives now in an out-house. She lives on the bits of bread and the potatoes the neighbours give her. The things of this world are no longer realities to her. Her realities are what she sees and hears in that window. She told me last night the saints were singing about her. I don't like to encourage her to talk, but if you would like to hear her—Biddy, come here!"

The old woman came back as a dog comes to its master, joyful, and with brightening eyes.

"Tell us what you saw last night."

"Well, your reverence, I was asleep, and there suddenly came a knocking at the door, and I got up, and then I heard a voice say, 'open the door.' There was a beautiful young man outside, his hair was yellow and curly, and he was dressed in white. He came into the room first, and he was followed by other saints, and they had harps in their hands, and they sang for a long while; they sang beautiful music. Come to the window and you will hear it for yourselves. Someone is always singing it in the window, not always as clearly as they did last night."

"We'll go to see your window presently."

The old woman crept back to her place and the priest and the young man began to talk about the possibilities of miracles in modern times, and they talked on until the sudden sight of Biddy gave them pause.

"Look at her," said the young man, "can you doubt that she sees Heaven quite plainly, and that the saints visited her just as she told us."

"No doubt, no doubt. But she's a great trial to us at Mass. . . The Mass must not be interrupted."

"I suppose even miracles are inconvenient at times, Father Maguire. Be patient with her, let her enjoy her happiness."

And the two men stood looking at her, trying vainly to imagine what her happiness might be.

THE EXILE.

THE EXILE.

I.

PAT PHELAN'S bullocks were ready for the fair, and so were his pigs; but the two fairs happened to come on the same day, and it was the pigs he would prefer to sell himself. His eldest son, James, was staying at home to help Catherine Ford with her churning; Peter, his second son, was not much of a hand at a bargain; it was Pat and James who managed the farm, and when Peter had gone to bed they began to wonder if Peter would be able to sell the bullocks. Pat said Peter had been told what was the lowest price he could take, James said there was a good demand for cattle, and at last they decided that Peter could not fail to sell the beasts.

Pat was to meet Peter at the cross-roads about twelve o'clock in the day. But he had sold his pigs early, and was half an hour in front of him, and sitting on the stile waiting for his son, he thought if Peter got thirteen pounds apiece for the bullocks he would say he had done very well. A good jobber, he thought, would be able to get ten shillings apiece

more for them; and he went on thinking of what price Peter would get, until, suddenly looking up the road, whom should he see but Peter coming down the road with the bullocks in front of him. He could hardly believe his eyes, and it was a long story that Peter told him about two men who wanted to buy the bullocks early in the morning. They had offered him eleven pounds ten, and when he would not sell them at that price they had stood laughing at the bullocks and doing all they could to keep off other buyers. Peter was quite certain it was not his fault, and he began to argue. But Pat Phelan was too disappointed to argue with him, and he let him go on talking. At last Peter ceased talking, and this seemed to Pat Phelan a good thing.

The bullocks trotted in front of them. They were seven miles from home, and fifteen miles are hard on fat animals, and he could truly say he was at a loss of three pounds that day if he took into account the animals' keep.

Father and son walked on, and not a word passed between them till they came to Michael Quinn's public-house. "Did you get three pounds apiece for the pigs, father?"

"I did, and three pounds five."

"We might have a drink out of that."

It seemed to Peter that the men inside were laughing at him or at the lemonade he was drinking, and, seeing among them one who had been interfering with him all day, he told him he would put

him out of the house, and he would have done it if Mrs. Quinn had not told him that no one put a man out of her house without her leave.

"Do you hear that, Peter Phelan?"

"If you can't best them at the fair," said his father, "it will be little good for you to put them out of the public-house afterwards."

And on that Peter swore he would never go to a fair again, and they walked on until they came to the priest's house.

"It was bad for me when I listened to you and James. If I hadn't I might have been in Maynooth now."

"Now, didn't you come home talking of the polis?"

"Wasn't that after?"

They could not agree as to when his idea of life had changed from the priesthood to the police, nor when it had changed back from the police to the priesthood, and Peter talked on, telling of the authors he had read with Father Tom—Caesar, Virgil, even Quintillian. The priest had said that Quintillian was too difficult for him, and Pat Phelan was in doubt whether the difficulty of Quintillian was a sufficient reason for preferring the police to the priesthood.

"Any way it isn't a girl that's troubling him," he said to himself, and he looked at Peter, and wondered how it was that Peter did not want to be married. Peter was a great big fellow, over six feet high, that many a girl would take a fancy to, and Pat Phelan had long had his eye on a girl who would

marry him. And his failure to sell the bullocks brought all the advantages of this marriage to Pat Phelan's mind, and he began to talk to his son. Peter listened, and seemed to take an interest in all that was said, expressing now and then a doubt if the girl would marry him; the possibility that she might seemed to turn his thoughts again towards the priesthood.

The bullocks had stopped to graze, and Peter's indecisions threw Pat Phelan fairly out of his humour.

"Well, Peter, I am tired listening to you. If it's a priest you want to be, go in there, and Father Tom will tell you what you must do, and I'll drive the bullocks home myself."

And on that Pat laid his hand on the priest's green gate, and Peter walked through.

II.

THERE were trees about the priest's house, and there were two rooms on the right and left of the front door. The parlour was on the left, and when Peter came in the priest was sitting reading in his mahogany armchair. Peter wondered if it were this very mahogany chair that had put the idea of being a priest into his head. Just now, while walking with his father, he had been thinking that they had not

even a wooden armchair in their house, though it was the best house in the village—only some stools and some plain wooden chairs.

The priest could see that Peter had come to him for a purpose. But Peter did not speak; he sat raising his pale, perplexed eyes, looking at the priest from time to time, thinking that if he told Father Tom of his failure at the fair, Father Tom might think he only wished to become a priest because he had no taste for farming.

"You said, Father Tom, if I worked hard I should be able to read Quintillian in six months."

The priest's face always lighted up at the name of a classical author, and Peter said he was sorry he had been taken away from his studies. But he had been thinking the matter over, and his mind was quite made up, and he was sure he would sooner be a priest than anything else.

"My boy, I knew you would never put on the policeman's belt. The bishop will hold an examination for the places that are vacant in Maynooth." Peter promised to work hard, and he already saw himself sitting in an armchair, in a mahogany armchair, reading classics, and winning admiration for his learning.

He walked home, thinking that everything was at last decided, when suddenly, without warning, when he was thinking of something else, his heart misgave him. It was as if he heard a voice saying: "My boy, I don't think you will ever put on the cassock. You will never walk with the biretta on your head." The

priest had said that he did not believe he would ever buckle on the policeman's belt. He was surprised to hear the priest say this, though he had often heard himself thinking the same thing. What surprised and frightened him now was that he heard himself saying he would never put on the cassock and the biretta. It is frightening to hear yourself saying you are not going to do the thing you have just made up your mind you will do.

He had often thought he would like to put the money he would get out of the farm into a shop, but when it came to the point of deciding he had not been able to make up his mind. He had always had a great difficulty in knowing what was the right thing to do. His uncle William had never thought of anything but the priesthood. James never thought of anything but the farm. A certain friend of his had never thought of doing anything but going to America. Suddenly he heard some one call him.

It was Catherine, and Peter wondered if she were thinking to tell him she was going to marry James.

For she always knew what she wanted. Many said that James was not the one she wanted, but Peter did not believe that, and he looked at Catherine and admired her face, and thought what a credit she would be to the family. No one wore such beautifully knitted stockings as Catherine, and no one's boots were so prettily laced.

But not knowing exactly what to say, he asked

her if she had come from their house, and he went on talking, telling her that she would find nobody in the parish like James. James was the best farmer in the parish, none such a judge of cattle; and he said all this and a great deal more, until he saw that Catherine did not care to talk about James at all.

"I daresay all you say is right, Peter; but you see he's your brother."

And then, fearing she had said something hurtful, she told him that she liked James as much as a girl could like a man who was not going to be her husband.

"And are you sure, Catherine, that James is not going to be your husband?"

"Yes," she said, "quite sure."

Their talk had taken them as far as Catherine's door, and Peter went away wondering why he had not told her he was going to Maynooth; for no one would have been able to advise him as well as Catherine, she had such good sense.

III.

THERE was a quarter of a mile between the two houses, and while Peter was talking to Catherine, Pat Phelan was listening to his son James, who was telling his father that Catherine had said she would not marry him.

Pat was over sixty, but he did not give one the impression of an old man. The hair was not grey, there was still a little red in the whiskers. James, who sat opposite to him, holding his hands to the blaze, was not as good-looking a man as his father, the nose was not as fine, nor were the eyes as keen. There was more of the father in Peter than in James.

When Peter opened the half-door, awaking the dozen hens that roosted on the beam, he glanced from one to the other, for he suspected that his father was telling James how he had failed to sell the bullocks. But the tone of his father's voice when he asked him what had detained him on the road told him he was mistaken; and then he remembered that Catherine had said she would not marry James, and he began to pity his brother.

"I met Catherine on the road, and I could do no less than walk as far as her door with her."

"You could do no less than that, Peter," said James.

"And what do you mean by that, James?"

"Only this, that it is always the crooked way, Peter; for if it had been you that had asked her she would have had you and jumping."

"She would have had me!"

"And now don't you think you had better run after her, Peter, and ask her if she'll have you?"

"I'll never do that; and it is hurtful, James, that you should think such a thing of me, that I would go behind your back and try to get a girl from you."

"I did not mean that, Peter; but if she won't have me, you had better try if you can get her."

And suddenly Peter felt a resolve come into his heart, and his manner grew exultant.

"I've seen Father Tom, and he said I can pass the examination. I'm going to be a priest."

And when they were lying down side by side Peter said, "James, it will be all right." Knowing there was a great heart-sickness on his brother, he put out his hand. "As sure as I lie here she will be lying next you before this day twelvemonths. Yes, James, in this very bed, lying here where I am lying now."

"I don't believe it, Peter."

Peter loved his brother, and to bring the marriage about he took some money from his father and went to live at Father Tom's, and he worked so hard during the next two months that he passed the bishop's examination. And it was late one night when he went to bid them good-bye at home.

"What makes you so late, Peter?"

"Well, James, I didn't want to meet Catherine on the road."

"You are a good boy, Peter," said the father, "and God will reward you for the love you bear your brother. I don't think there are two better men in the world. God has been good to me to give me two such sons."

And then the three sat round the fire, and Pat Phelan began to talk family history.

"Well, Peter, you see, there has always been a priest

in the family, and it would be a pity if there's not one in this generation. In '48 your grand-uncles joined the rebels, and they had to leave the country. You have an uncle a priest, and you are just like your uncle William."

And then James talked, but he did not seem to know very well what he was saying, and his father told him to stop—that Peter was going where God had called him.

"And you will tell her," Peter said, getting up, "that I have gone."

"I haven't the heart for telling her such a thing. She will be finding it out soon enough."

Outside the house—for he was sleeping at Father Tom's that night—Peter thought there was little luck in James's eyes; inside the house Pat Phelan and James thought that Peter was settled for life.

"He will be a fine man standing on an altar," James said, "and perhaps he will be a bishop some day."

"And you'll see her when you're done reaping, and you won't forget what Peter told you," said Pat Phelan.

And, after reaping, James put on his coat and walked up the hillside, where he thought he would find Catherine.

"I hear Peter has left you," she said, as he opened the gate to let the cows through.

"He came last night to bid us good-bye."

And they followed the cows under the tall hedges.

"I shall be reaping to-morrow," he said. "I will see you at the same time."

And henceforth he was always at hand to help her to drive her cows home; and every night, as he sat with his father by the fire, Pat Phelan expected James to tell him about Catherine. One evening he came back overcome, looking so wretched that his father could see that Catherine had told him she would not marry him.

"She won't have me," he said.

"A man can always get a girl if he tries long enough," his father said, hoping to encourage him.

"That would be true enough for another. Catherine knows she will never get Peter. Another man might get her, but I'm always reminding her of Peter."

She told him the truth one day, that if she did not marry Peter she would marry no one, and James felt like dying. He grew pale and could not speak.

At last he said, "How is that?"

"I don't know. I don't know, James. But you mustn't talk to me about marriage again."

And he had to promise her not to speak of marriage again, and he kept his word. At the end of the year she asked him if he had any news of Peter.

"The last news we had of him was about a month ago, and he said he hoped to be admitted into the minor orders."

And a few days afterwards he heard that Catherine had decided to go into a convent.

"So this is the way it has ended," he thought. And he seemed no longer fit for work on the farm. He was seen about the road smoking, and sometimes

he went down to the ball-alley, and sat watching the games in the evening. It was thought that he would take to drink, but he took to fishing instead, and was out all day in his little boat on the lake, however hard the wind might blow. The fisherman said he had seen him in the part of the lake where the wind blew the hardest, and that he could hardly pull against the waves.

"His mind is away. I don't think he'll do any good in this country," his father said.

And the old man was very sad, for when James was gone he would have no one, and he did not feel he would be able to work the farm for many years longer. He and James used to sit smoking on either side of the fireplace, and Pat Phelan knew that James was thinking of America all the while. One evening, as they were sitting like this, the door was opened suddenly.

"Peter!" said James. And he jumped up from the fire to welcome his brother.

"It is good for sore eyes to see the sight of you again," said Pat Phelan. "Well, tell us the news. If we had known you were coming we would have sent the cart to meet you."

As Peter did not answer, they began to think that something must have happened. Perhaps Peter was not going to become a priest after all, and would stay at home with his father to learn to work the farm.

"You see, I did not know myself until yesterday. It was only yesterday that——"

"So you are not going to be a priest? We are glad to hear that, Peter."

"How is that?"

He had thought over what he should say, and without waiting to hear why they were glad, he told them the professor, who overlooked his essays, had refused to recognise their merits—he had condemned the best things in them; and Peter said it was extraordinary that such a man should be appointed to such a place. Then he told them that the Church afforded little chances for the talents of young men unless they had a great deal of influence.

And they sat listening to him, hearing how the college might be reformed. He had a gentle, winning way of talking, and his father and brother forgot their own misfortunes thinking how they might help him.

"Well, Peter, you have come back none too soon."

"And how is that? What have you been doing since I went away? You all wanted to hear about Maynooth."

"Of course we did, my boy. Tell him, James."

"Oh! it is nothing particular," said James. "It is only this, Peter—I am going to America."

"And who will work the farm?"

"Well, Peter, we were thinking that you might work it yourself."

"I work the farm! Going to America, James! But what about Catherine?"

"That's what I'm coming to, Peter. She has

gone into a convent. And that's what's happened since you went away. I can't stop here, Peter—I will never do a hand's turn in Ireland—and father is getting too old to go to the fairs. That's what we were thinking when you came in."

There was a faint tremble in his voice, and Peter saw how heartsick his brother was.

"I will do my best, James."

"I knew you would."

"Yes, I will," said Peter; and he sat down by the fire. And his father said

"You are not smoking, Peter."

"No," he said: "I've given up smoking."

"Will you drink something?" said James. "We have got a drain of whiskey in the house."

"No, I have had to give up spirits. It doesn't agree with me. And I don't take tea in the morning. Have you got any cocoa in the house?"

It was not the kind of cocoa he liked, but he said he would be able to manage.

IV.

AND when the old man came through the doorway in the morning buttoning his braces, he saw Peter stirring his cocoa. There was something absurd as well as something attractive in Peter, and his father

had to laugh when he said he couldn't eat American bacon.

"My stomach wouldn't retain it. I require very little, but that little must be the best."

And when James took him into the farmyard, he noticed that Peter crossed the yard like one who had never been in a farmyard before; he looked less like a farmer than ever, and when he looked at the cows, James wondered if he could be taught to see the difference between an Alderney and a Durham.

"There's Kate," he said; "she's a good cow; as good a cow as we have, and we can't get any price for her because of that hump on her back."

They went to the styes; there were three pigs there and a great sow with twelve little bonhams, and the little ones were white with silky hair, and Peter asked how old they were, and when they would be fit for killing. And James told Peter there were seven acres in the Big field.

"Last year we had oats in the Holly field; next year you'll sow potatoes there." And he explained the rotation of crops. "And, now," he said, "we will go down to Crow's Oak. You have never done any ploughing, Peter; I will show you."

It was extraordinary how little Peter knew. He could not put the harness on the horse, and he reminded James that he had gone into the post office when he left school. James gave in to him that the old red horse was hard to drive, but James could drive him better than Peter could lead him; and Peter

marvelled at the skill with which James raised his hand from the shaft of the plough and struck the horse with the rein whilst he kept the plough steady with the other hand.

"Now, Peter, you must try again."

At the end of the headland where the plough turned, Peter always wanted to stop and talk about something; but James said they would have to get on with the work, and Peter walked after the plough, straining after it for three hours, and then he said: "James, let me drive the horse. I can do no more."

"You won't feel it so much when you are accustomed to it," said James.

Anything seemed to him better than a day's ploughing: even getting up at three in the morning to go to a fair.

He went to bed early, as he used to, and they talked of him over the fire, as they used to. But however much they talked, they never seemed to find what they were seeking—his vocation—until one evening an idea suddenly rose out of their talk.

"A good wife is the only thing for Peter," said Pat.

And they went on thinking.

"A husband would be better for her," said Pat Phelan, "than a convent."

"I cannot say I agree with you there. Think of all the good them nuns are doing."

"She isn't a nun yet," said Pat Phelan.

And the men smoked on a while, and they ruminated as they smoked.

"It would be better, James, that Peter got her than that she would stay in a convent."

"I wouldn't say that," said James.

"You see," said his father, "she did not go into the convent because she had a calling, but because she was crossed in love."

And after another long while James said, "It is a bitter dose, I am thinking, father, but you must go and tell her that Peter has left Maynooth."

"And what would the Reverend Mother be saying to me if I went to her with such a story as that? Isn't your heart broken enough already, James, without wanting me to be breaking it still more? Sure, James, you could never see her married to Peter?"

"If she were to marry Peter I should be able to go to America, and that is the only thing for me."

"That would be poor consolation for you, James."

"Well, it is the best I shall get, to see Peter settled, and to know that there will be some one to look after you, father."

"You are a good son, James."

They talked on, and as they talked it became clearer to them that some one must go to-morrow to the convent and tell Catherine that Peter had left Maynooth.

"But wouldn't it be a pity," said Pat Phelan, "to tell her this if Peter is not going to marry her in the end?"

"I will have him out of his bed," said James, "and he'll tell us before this fire if he will or won't."

"It's a serious thing you are doing, James, to get a girl out of a convent, I am thinking."

"It will be on my advice that you will be doing this, father; and now I'll go and get Peter out of his bed."

And Peter was brought in, asking what they wanted of him at this hour of the night; and when they told him what they had been talking about and the plans they had been making, he said he would be catching his death of cold, and they threw some sods of turf on the fire.

"It is against myself that I am asking a girl to leave the convent, even for you, Peter," said James. "But we can think of nothing else."

"Peter will be able to tell us if it is a sin that we'd be doing."

"It is only right that Catherine should know the truth before she made her vows," Peter said. "But this is very unexpected, father. I really——"

"Peter, I'd take it as a great kindness. I shall never do a hand's turn in this country. I want to get to America. It will be the saving of me."

"And now, Peter," said his father, "tell us for sure if you will have the girl?"

"Faith I will, though I never thought of marriage, if it be to please James." Seeing how heart sick his brother was, he said, "I can't say I like her as you like her; but if she likes me I will promise to do right by her. James, you're going away; we may never see you again. It is all very sad. And now you'll let me go back to bed."

"Peter, I knew you would not say no to me; I can't bear this any longer."

"And now," said Peter, "let me go back to bed. I am catching my death."

And he ran back to his room, and left his brother and father talking by the fire.

V.

PAT thought the grey mare would take him in faster than the old red horse; and the old man sat, his legs swinging over the shaft, wondering what he should say to the Reverend Mother, and how she would listen to his story; and when he came to the priest's house a great wish came upon him to ask the priest's advice. The priest was walking up his little lawn reading his breviary, and a great fear came on Pat Phelan, and he thought he must ask the priest what he should do.

The priest heard the story over the little wall, and he was sorry for the old man.

It took him a long time to tell the story, and when he was finished the priest said:—

"But where are you going, Pat?"

"That's what I stopped to tell you, your reverence. I was thinking I might be going to the convent to tell Catherine that Peter has come back."

"Well it wasn't yourself that thought of doing such a thing as that, Pat Phelan."

But at every word the priest said Pat Phelan's face grew more stubborn, and at last he said:—

"Well, your reverence, that isn't the advice I expected from you," and he struck the mare with the ends of the reins and let her trot up the hill. Nor did the mare stop trotting till she had reached the top of the hill, and Pat Phelan had never known her do such a thing before. From the top of the hill there was a view of the bog, and Pat thought of the many fine loads of turf he had had out of that bog, and the many young fellows he had seen there cutting turf. "But every one is leaving the country," the old man said to himself, and his chin dropped into his shirt-collar, and he held the reins loosely, letting the mare trot or walk as she liked. And he let many pass him without bidding them the hour of the day, for he was too much overcome by his own grief to notice any one.

The mare trotted gleefully; soft clouds curled over the low horizon far away, and the sky was blue overhead; and the poor country was very beautiful in the still autumn weather, only it was empty. He passed two or three fine houses that the gentry had left to caretakers long ago. The fences were gone, cattle strayed through the woods, the drains were choked with weeds, the stagnant water was spreading out into the fields, and Pat Phelan noticed these things, for he remembered what this country was forty years ago. The devil a bit of lonesomeness there was in it then.

He asked a girl if they would be thatching the house that autumn; but she answered that the thatch would last out the old people, and she was going to join her sister in America.

"She's right—they're all there now. Why should anyone stop here?" the old man said.

The mare tripped, and he took this to be a sign that he should turn back. But he did not go back. Very soon the town began, in broken pavements and dirty cottages; going up the hill there were some slated roofs, but there was no building of any importance except the church.

At the end of the main street, where the trees began again, the convent stood in the middle of a large garden, and Pat Phelan remembered he had heard that the nuns were doing well with their dairy and their laundry.

He knocked, and a lay-sister peeped through the grating, and then she opened the door a little way, and at first he thought he would have to go back without seeing either Catherine or the Reverend Mother. For he had got no further than "Sister Catherine," when the lay-sister cut him short with the news that Sister Catherine was in retreat, and could see no one. The Reverend Mother was busy.

"But," said Pat, "you're not going to let Catherine take vows without hearing me."

"If it is about Sister Catherine's vows——."

"Yes, it is about them I've come, and I must see the Reverend Mother."

The lay-sister said Sister Catherine was going to be clothed at the end of the week.

"Well, that is just the reason I've come here."

On that the lay-sister led him into the parlour, and went in search of the Reverend Mother.

The floor was so thickly bees-waxed that the rug slipped under his feet, and, afraid lest he might fall down, he stood quite still, impressed by the pious pictures on the walls, and by the large books upon the table, and by the poor-box, and by the pious inscriptions. He began to think how much easier was this pious life than the life of the world—the rearing of children, the failure of crops, and the loneliness. Here life slips away without one perceiving it, and it seemed a pity to bring her back to trouble. He stood holding his hat in his old hands, and the time seemed very long. At last the door opened, and a tall woman with sharp, inquisitive eyes came in.

"You have come to speak to me about Sister Catherine?"

"Yes, my lady."

"And what have you got to tell me about her?"

"Well, my son thought and I thought last night—we were all thinking we had better tell you—last night was the night that my son came back."

At the word Maynooth a change of expression came into her face, but when he told that Peter no longer wished to be a priest her manner began to grow hostile again, and she got up from her chair and said:

"But really, Mr. Phelan, I have got a great deal of business to attend to."

"But, my lady, you see that Catherine wanted to marry my son Peter, and it is because he went to Maynooth that she came here. I don't think she'd want to be a nun if she knew that he didn't want to be a priest."

"I cannot agree with you, Mr. Phelan, in that. I have seen a great deal of Sister Catherine—she has been with us now for nearly a year—and if she ever entertained the wishes you speak of, I feel sure she has forgotten them. Her mind is now set on higher things."

"Of course you may be right, my lady; very likely. It isn't for me to argue with you about such things; but you see I have come a long way, and if I could see Catherine herself——"

"That is impossible. Catherine is in retreat."

"So the lay-sister told me; but I thought——"

"Sister Catherine is going to be clothed next Saturday, and I can assure you, Mr. Phelan, that the wishes you tell me of are forgotten. I know her very well. I can answer for Sister Catherine."

The rug slipped under the peasant's feet and his eyes wandered round the room; and the Reverend Mother told him how busy she was, she really could not talk to him any more that day.

"You see, it all rests with Sister Catherine herself."

"That's just it," said the old man; "that's just it, my lady. My son Peter, who has come from

Maynooth, told us last night that Catherine should know everything that has happened, so that she may not be sorry afterwards, otherwise I wouldn't have come here, my lady. I wouldn't have come to trouble you."

"I am sorry, Mr. Phelan, that your son Peter has left Maynooth. It is sad indeed when one finds that one has not a vocation. But that happens sometimes. I don't think it will be Catherine's case. And now, Mr. Phelan, I must ask you to excuse me," and the Reverend Mother persuaded the unwilling peasant into the passage, and he followed the lay-sister down the passage to the gate and got into his cart again.

"No wonder," he thought, "they don't want to let Catherine out, now that they have got that great farm, and not one among them, I'll be bound, who can manage it except Catherine."

At the very same moment the same thoughts passed through the Reverend Mother's mind. She had not left the parlour yet, and stood thinking how she should manage if Catherine were to leave them. "Why," she asked, "should he choose to leave Maynooth at such a time? It is indeed unfortunate. There is nothing," she reflected, "that gives a woman so much strength as to receive the veil. She always feels stronger after her clothing. She feels that the world is behind her."

The Reverend Mother reflected that perhaps it would be better for Catherine's sake and for Peter's sake—indeed, for everyone's sake—if she were not to

tell Catherine of Pat Phelan's visit until after the clothing. She might tell Catherine three months hence. The disadvantage of this would be that Catherine might hear that Peter had left Maynooth. In a country place news of this kind cannot be kept out of a convent. And if Catherine were going to leave, it were better that she should leave them now than leave them six months hence, after her clothing.

"There are many ways of looking at it," the Reverend Mother reflected. "If I don't tell her, she may never hear it. I might tell her later, when she has taught one of the nuns how to manage the farm." She took two steps towards the door and stopped to think again, and she was thinking when a knock came to the door. She answered mechanically, "Come in," and Catherine wondered at the Reverend Mother's astonishment.

"I wish to speak to you, dear Mother," she said timidly. But seeing the Reverend Mother's face change expression, she said, "Perhaps another time will suit you better."

The Reverend Mother stood looking at her, irresolute; and Catherine, who had never seen the Reverend Mother irresolute before, wondered what was passing in her mind.

"I know you are busy, dear mother, but what I have come to tell you won't take very long."

"Well, then, tell it to me, my child."

"It is only this, Reverend Mother. I had better tell you now, for you are expecting the bishop, and

my clothing is fixed for the end of the week, and ——"

"And," said the Reverend Mother, "you feel that you are not certain of your vocation."

"That is it, dear mother. I thought I had better tell you." Reading disappointment in the nun's face, Catherine said, "I hesitated to tell you before. I had hoped that the feeling would pass away; but, dear mother, it isn't my fault; everyone has not a vocation."

Then Catherine noticed a softening in the Reverend Mother's face, and she asked Catherine to sit down by her; and Catherine told her she had come to the convent because she was crossed in love, and not as the others came, because they wished to give up their wills to God.

"Our will is the most precious thing in us, and that is why the best thing we can do is to give it up to you, for in giving it up to you, dear mother, we are giving it up to God. I know all these things, but——"

"You should have told me of this when you came here, Catherine, and then I would not have advised you to come to live with us."

"Mother, you must forgive me. My heart was broken, and I could not do otherwise. And you have said yourself that I made the dairy a success."

"If you had stayed with us, Catherine, you would have made the dairy a success; but we have got no one to take your place. However, since it is the

will of God, I suppose we must try to get on as well as we can without you. And now tell me, Catherine, when it was that you changed your mind. It was only the other day you told me you wished to become a nun. You said you were most anxious for your clothing. How is it that you have changed your mind?"

Catherine's eyes brightened, and speaking like one illuminated by some inward light, she said:

"It was the second day of my retreat, mother. I was walking in the garden where the great cross stands amid the rocks. Sister Angela and Sister Mary were with me, and I was listening to what they were saying, when suddenly my thoughts were taken away and I remembered those at home. I remembered Mr. Phelan, and James, who wanted to marry me, but whom I would not marry; and it seemed to me that I saw him leaving his father—it seemed to me that I saw him going away to America. I don't know how it was—you will not believe me, dear mother—but I saw the ship lying in the harbour, that is to take him away. And then I thought of the old man sitting at home with no one to look after him, and it was not a seeming, but a certainty mother. It came over me suddenly that my duty was not here, but there. Of course you can't agree with me, but I cannot resist it, it was a call."

"But the Evil One, my dear child, calls us too; we must be careful not to mistake the devil's call for God's call."

"Mother, I daresay." Tears came to Catherine's eyes, she began to weep. "I can't argue with you, mother, I only know——" She could not speak for sobbing, and between her sobs she said, "I only know that I must go home."

She recovered herself very soon, and the Reverend Mother took her hand and said:

"Well, my dear child, I shall not stand in your way."

Even the Reverend Mother could not help thinking that the man who got her would get a charming wife. Her face was rather long and white, and she had long female eyes with dark lashes, and her eyes were full of tenderness. She had spoken out of so deep a conviction that the Reverend Mother had begun to believe that her mission was perhaps to look after this hapless young man; and when she told the Reverend Mother that yesterday she had felt a conviction that Peter was not going to be a priest, the Reverend Mother felt that she must tell her of Pat Phelan's visit.

"I did not tell you at once, my dear child, because I wished to know from yourself how you felt about this matter," the nun said; and she told Catherine that she was quite right, that Peter had left Maynooth. "He hopes to marry you, Catherine."

A quiet glow came into the postulant's eyes, and she seemed engulfed in some deep joy.

"How did he know that I cared for him?" the girl said, half to herself, half to the nun.

"I suppose his father or his brother must have told him," the nun answered.

And then Catherine, fearing to show too much interest in things that the nun deemed frivolous, said, "I am sorry to leave before my work is done here. But, mother, so it has all come true; it was extraordinary what I felt that morning in the garden," she said, returning to her joy. "Mother, do you believe in visions?"

"The saints, of course, have had visions. We believe in the visions of the saints."

"But after all, mother, there are many duties besides religious duties."

"I suppose, Catherine, you feel it to be your duty to look after this young man?"

"Yes, I think that is it. I must go now, mother, and see Sister Angela, and write out for her all I know about the farm, and what she is to do, for if one is not very careful with a farm one loses a great deal of money. There is no such thing as making two ends meet. One either makes money or loses money."

And then Catherine again seemed to be engulfed in some deep joy, out of which she roused herself with difficulty.

VI.

WHEN her postulant left the room, the Reverend Mother wrote to Pat Phelan, asking him to come next morning with his cart to fetch Catherine. And next morning, when the lay sister told Catherine that he was waiting for her, the Reverend Mother said:

"We shall be able to manage, Catherine. You have told Sister Angela everything, and you will not forget to come to see us, I hope."

"Mr. Phelan," said the lay sister, "told me to tell you that one of his sons is going to America to-day. Sister Catherine will have to go at once if she wishes to see him."

"I must see James. I must see him before he leaves for America. Oh," she said, turning to the Reverend Mother, "do you remember that I told you I had seen the ship? Everything has come true. You can't believe any longer that it is not a call."

Her box was in the cart, and as Pat turned the mare round he said: "I hope we won't miss James at the station. That's the reason I came for you so early. I thought you would like to see him."

"Why did you not come earlier?" she cried.

"All my happiness will be spoilt if I don't see James."

The convent was already behind her, and her thoughts were now upon poor James, whose heart she had broken. She knew that Peter would never love her as well as James, but this could not be helped. Her vision in the garden consoled her, for she could no longer doubt that she was doing right in going to Peter, that her destiny was with him.

She knew the road well, she knew all the fields, every house and every gap in the walls. Sign after sign went by; at last they were within sight of the station. The signal was still up, and the train had not gone yet; at the end of the platform she saw James and Peter. She let Pat Phelan drive the cart round; she could get to them quicker by running down the steps and crossing the line. The signal went down.

"Peter," she said, "we shall have time to talk presently. I want to speak to James now."

And they walked up to the platform, leaving Peter to talk to his father.

"Paddy Maguire is outside," Pat said; "I asked him to stand at the mare's head."

"James," said Catherine, "it is very sad you are going away. We may never see you again, and there is no time to talk, and I've much to say to you."

"I am going away, Catherine, but maybe I will be coming back some day. I was going to say maybe you would be coming over after me; but the

land is good land, and you'll be able to make a living out of it."

And then they spoke of Peter. James said he was too great a scholar for a farmer, and it was a pity he could not find out what he was fit for—for surely he was fit for something great after all.

And Catherine said:

"I shall be able to make something out of Peter."

His emotion almost overcame him, and Catherine looked aside so that she should not see his tears.

"This is no time for talking of Peter," she said. "You are going away, James, but you will come back. You will find another woman better than I am in America, James. I don't know what to say to you. The train will be here in a minute. I am distracted. But one day you will be coming back, and we shall be very proud of you when you come back. I shall rebuild the house, and we shall be all happy then. Oh! here's the train. Good-bye; you have been very good to me. Oh, James! shall I ever see you again?"

Then the crowd swept them along, and James had to take his father's hand and his brother's hand. There were a great many people in the station—hundreds were going away in the same ship that James was going in. The train was followed by wailing relatives. They ran alongside of the train, waving their hands until they could no longer keep up with the train. James waved a red handkerchief until the train was out of sight. It disappeared in a

cutting, and a moment after Catherine and Peter remembered they were standing side by side. They were going to be married in a few days! They started a little, hearing a step beside them. It was old Phelan.

"I think," he said, "it is time to be getting home."

HOME-SICKNESS.

HOME SICKNESS

I.

HE told the doctor he was due in the bar-room at eight o'clock in the morning; the bar-room was in a slum in the Bowery; and he had only been able to keep himself in health by getting up at five o'clock and going for long walks in the Central Park.

"A sea voyage is what you want," said the doctor. "Why not go to Ireland for two or three months? You will come back a new man."

"I'd like to see Ireland again."

And he began to wonder how the people at home were getting on. The doctor was right. He thanked him, and three weeks afterwards he landed in Cork.

As he sat in the railway carriage he recalled his native village—he could see it and its lake, and then the fields one by one, and the roads. He could see a large piece of rocky land—some three or four hundred acres of headland stretching out into the winding lake. Upon this headland the peasantry had been given permission to build their cabins by

former owners of the Georgian house standing on the pleasant green hill. The present owners considered the village a disgrace, but the villagers paid high rents for their plots of ground, and all the manual labour that the Big House required came from the village: the gardeners, the stable helpers, the house and the kitchen maids.

Bryden had been thirteen years in America, and when the train stopped at his station, he looked round to see if there were any changes in it. It was just the same blue limestone station-house as it was thirteen years ago. The platform and the sheds were the same, and there were five miles of road from the station to Duncannon. The sea voyage had done him good, but five miles were too far for him to-day; the last time he had walked the road, he had walked it in an hour and a half, carrying a heavy bundle on a stick.

He was sorry he did not feel strong enough for the walk; the evening was fine, and he would meet many people coming home from the fair, some of whom he had known in his youth, and they would tell him where he could get a clean lodging. But the carman would be able to tell him that; he called the car that was waiting at the station, and soon he was answering questions about America. But he wanted to hear of those who were still living in the old country, and after hearing the stories of many people he had forgotten, he heard that Mike Scully, who had been away in a situation for many years as a coachman in the King's County, had come back and built a fine

house with a concrete floor. Now there was a good loft in Mike Scully's house, and Mike would be pleased to take in a lodger.

Bryden remembered that Mike had been in a situation at the Big House; he had intended to be a jockey, but had suddenly shot up into a fine tall man, and had had to become a coachman instead. Bryden tried to recall the face, but he could only remember a straight nose, and a somewhat dusky complexion. Mike was one of the heroes of his childhood, and now his youth floated before him, and he caught glimpses of himself, something that was more than a phantom and less than a reality. Suddenly his reverie was broken: the carman pointed with his whip, and Bryden saw a tall, finely-built, middle-aged man coming through the gates, and the driver said:

"There's Mike Scully."

Mike had forgotten Bryden even more completely than Bryden had forgotten him, and many aunts and uncles were mentioned before he began to understand.

"You've grown into a fine man, James," he said, looking at Bryden's great width of chest. "But you are thin in the cheeks, and you're very sallow in the cheeks too."

"I haven't been very well lately—that is one of the reasons I have come back; but I want to see you all again."

Bryden paid the carman, wished him "God-speed," and he and Mike divided the luggage between them,

Mike carrying the bag and Bryden the bundle, and they walked round the lake, for the townland was at the back of the demesne; and while they walked, James proposed to pay Mike ten shillings a week for his board and lodging.

He remembered the woods thick and well-forested; now they were windworn, the drains were choked, and the bridge leading across the lake inlet was falling away. Their way led between long fields where herds of cattle were grazing; the road was broken—Bryden wondered how the villagers drove their carts over it, and Mike told him that the landlord could not keep it in repair, and he would not allow it to be kept in repair out of the rates, for then it would be a public road, and he did not think there should be a public road through his property.

At the end of many fields they came to the village, and it looked a desolate place, even on this fine evening, and Bryden remarked that the county did not seem to be as much lived in as it used to be. It was at once strange and familiar to see the chickens in the kitchen; and, wishing to re-knit himself to the old habits, he begged of Mrs. Scully not to drive them out, saying he did not mind them. Mike told his wife that Bryden was born in Duncannon, and when she heard Bryden's name she gave him her hand, after wiping it in her apron, saying he was heartily welcome, only she was afraid he would not care to sleep in a loft.

"Why wouldn't I sleep in a loft, a dry loft! You're

thinking a good deal of America over here," said he, "but I reckon it isn't all you think it. Here you work when you like and you sit down when you like; but when you have had a touch of blood-poisoning as I had, and when you have seen young people walking with a stick, you think that there is something to be said for old Ireland."

"Now won't you be taking a sup of milk? You'll be wanting a drink after travelling," said Mrs. Scully.

And when he had drunk the milk Mike asked him if he would like to go inside or if he would like to go for a walk.

"Maybe it is sitting down you would like to be."

And they went into the cabin, and started to talk about the wages a man could get in America, and the long hours of work.

And after Bryden had told Mike everything about America that he thought of interest, he asked Mike about Ireland. But Mike did not seem to be able to tell him much that was of interest. They were all very poor—poorer, perhaps, than when he left them.

"I don't think anyone except myself has a five pound note to his name."

Bryden hoped he felt sufficiently sorry for Mike. But after all Mike's life and prospects mattered little to him. He had come back in search of health; and he felt better already; the milk had done him good, and the bacon and cabbage in the pot sent forth a savoury odour. The Scullys were very kind, they

pressed him to make a good meal; a few weeks of country air and food, they said, would give him back the health he had lost in the Bowery; and when Bryden said he was longing for a smoke, Mike said there was no better sign than that. During his long illness he had never wanted to smoke, and he was a confirmed smoker.

It was comfortable to sit by the mild peat fire watching the smoke of their pipes drifting up the chimney, and all Bryden wanted was to be let alone; he did not want to hear of anyone's misfortunes, but about nine o'clock a number of villagers came in, and their appearance was depressing. Bryden remembered one or two of them—he used to know them very well when he was a boy; their talk was as depressing as their appearance, and he could feel no interest whatever in them. He was not moved when he heard that Higgins the stone mason was dead; he was not affected when he heard that Mary Kelly, who used to go to do the laundry at the Big House, had married; he was only interested when he heard she had gone to America. No, he had not met her there; America is a big place. Then one of the peasants asked him if he remembered Patsy Carabine, who used to do the gardening at the Big House. Yes, he remembered Patsy well. Patsy was in the poor-house. He had not been able to do any work on account of his arm; his house had fallen in; he had given up his holding and gone into the poor-house. All this was very sad, and to avoid hearing any further unpleasantness,

Bryden began to tell them about America. And they sat round listening to him; but all the talking was on his side; he wearied of it; and looking round the group he recognised a ragged hunchback with grey hair; twenty years ago he was a young hunchback, and, turning to him, Bryden asked him if he were doing well with his five acres.

"Ah, not much. This has been a bad season. The potatoes failed; they were watery—there is no diet in them."

These peasants were all agreed that they could make nothing out of their farms. Their regret was that they had not gone to America when they were young; and after striving to take an interest in the fact that O'Connor had lost a mare and foal worth forty pounds Bryden began to wish himself back in the slum. When they left the house he wondered if every evening would be like the present one. Mike piled fresh sods on the fire, and he hoped it would show enough light in the loft for Bryden to undress himself by.

The cackling of some geese in the road kept him awake, and the loneliness of the country seemed to penetrate to his bones, and to freeze the marrow in them. There was a bat in the loft—a dog howled in the distance—and then he drew the clothes over his head. Never had he been so unhappy, and the sound of Mike breathing by his wife's side in the kitchen added to his nervous terror. Then he dozed a little; and lying on his back he dreamed he was

awake, and the men he had seen sitting round the fireside that evening seemed to him like spectres come out of some unknown region of morass and reedy tarn. He stretched out his hands for his clothes, determined to fly from this house, but remembering the lonely road that led to the station he fell back on his pillow. The geese still cackled, but he was too tired to be kept awake any longer. He seemed to have been asleep only a few minutes when he heard Mike calling him. Mike had come half way up the ladder and was telling him that breakfast was ready. "What kind of breakfast will he give me?" Bryden asked himself as he pulled on his clothes. There were tea and hot griddle cakes for breakfast, and there were fresh eggs; there was sunlight in the kitchen, and he liked to hear Mike tell of the work he was going to do in the fields. Mike rented a farm of about fifteen acres, at least ten of it was grass; he grew an acre of potatoes and some corn, and some turnips for his sheep. He had a nice bit of meadow, and he took down his scythe, and as he put the whetstone in his belt Bryden noticed a second scythe, and he asked Mike if he should go down with him and help him to finish the field.

"You havn't done any mowing this many a year; I don't think you'd be of much help. You'd better go for a walk by the lake, but you may come in the afternoon if you like and help to turn the grass over."

Bryden was afraid he would find the lake shore very lonely, but the magic of returning health is

sufficient distraction for the convalescent, and the morning passed agreeably. The weather was still and sunny. He could hear the ducks in the reeds. The days dreamed themselves away, and it became his habit to go to the lake every morning. One morning he met the landlord, and they walked together, talking of the country, of what it had been, and the ruin it was slipping into. James Bryden told him that ill health had brought him back to Ireland; and the landlord lent him his boat, and Bryden rowed about the islands, and resting upon his oars he looked at the old castles, and remembered the pre-historic raiders that the landlord had told him about. He came across the stones to which the lake dwellers had tied their boats, and these signs of ancient Ireland were pleasing to Bryden in his present mood.

As well as the great lake there was a smaller lake in the bog where the villagers cut their turf. This lake was famous for its pike, and the landlord allowed Bryden to fish there, and one evening when he was looking for a frog with which to bait his line he met Margaret Dirken driving home the cows for the milking. Margaret was the herdsman's daughter, and she lived in a cottage near the Big House; but she came up to the village whenever there was a dance, and Bryden had found himself opposite to her in the reels. But until this evening he had had little opportunity of speaking to her, and he was glad to speak to someone, for the evening was lonely, and they stood talking together.

"You're getting your health again," she said. "You'll soon be leaving us."

"I'm in no hurry."

"You're grand people over there; I hear a man is paid four dollars a day for his work."

"And how much," said James, "has he to pay for his food and for his clothes?"

Her cheeks were bright and her teeth small, white and beautifully even; and a woman's soul looked at Bryden out of her soft Irish eyes. He was troubled and turned aside, and catching sight of a frog looking at him out of a tuft of grass he said—

"I have been looking for a frog to put upon my pike line."

The frog jumped right and left, and nearly escaped in some bushes, but he caught it and returned with it in his hand.

"It is just the kind of frog a pike will like," he said. "Look at its great white belly and its bright yellow back."

And without more ado he pushed the wire to which the hook was fastened through the frog's fresh body, and dragging it through the mouth he passed the hooks through the hind legs and tied the line to the end of the wire.

"I think," said Margaret, "I must be looking after my cows; its time I got them home."

"Won't you come down to the lake while I set my line?"

She thought for a moment and said:—

"No, I'll see you from here."

He went down to the reedy tarn, and at his approach several snipe got up, and they flew above his head uttering sharp cries. His fishing-rod was a long hazel stick, and he threw the frog as far as he could into the lake. In doing this he roused some wild ducks; a mallard and two ducks got up, and they flew toward the larger lake. Margaret watched them; they flew in a line with an old castle; and they had not disappeared from view when Bryden came toward her, and he and she drove the cows home together that evening.

They had not met very often when she said, "James, you had better not come here so often calling to me."

"Don't you wish me to come?"

"Yes, I wish you to come well enough, but keeping company is not the custom of the country, and I don't want to be talked about."

"Are you afraid the priest would speak against us from the altar?"

"He has spoken against keeping company, but it is not so much what the priest says, for there is no harm in talking."

"But if you are going to be married there is no harm in walking out together."

"Well, not so much, but marriages are made differently in these parts; there is not much courting here."

And next day it was known in the village that James was going to marry Margaret Dirken.

His desire to excel the boys in dancing had caused a stir of gaiety in the parish, and for some time past there had been dancing in every house where there was a floor fit to dance upon; and if the cottager had no money to pay for a barrel of beer, James Bryden, who had money, sent him a barrel, so that Margaret might get her dance. She told him that they sometimes crossed over into another parish where the priest was not so averse to dancing, and James wondered. And next morning at Mass he wondered at their simple fervour. Some of them held their hands above their head as they prayed, and all this was very new and very old to James Bryden. But the obedience of these people to their priest surprised him. When he was a lad they had not been so obedient, or he had forgotten their obedience; and he listened in mixed anger and wonderment to the priest, who was scolding his parishioners, speaking to them by name, saying that he had heard there was dancing going on in their homes. Worse than that, he said he had seen boys and girls loitering about the roads, and the talk that went on was of one kind—love. He said that newspapers containing love stories were finding their way into the people's houses, stories about love, in which there was nothing elevating or ennobling. The people listened, accepting the priest's opinion without question. And their submission was pathetic. It was the submission of a primitive people clinging to religious authority, and Bryden contrasted the weakness and incompetence of the people about

him with the modern restlessness and cold energy of the people he had left behind him.

One evening, as they were dancing, a knock came to the door, and the piper stopped playing, and the dancers whispered :—

"Some one has told on us; it is the priest."

And the awe-stricken villagers crowded round the cottage fire, afraid to open the door. But the priest said that if they did not open the door he would put his shoulder to it and force it open. Bryden went towards the door, saying he would allow no one to threaten him, priest or no priest, but Margaret caught his arm and told him that if he said anything to the priest, the priest would speak against them from the altar, and they would be shunned by the neighbours. It was Mike Scully who went to the door and let the priest in, and he came in saying they were dancing their souls into hell.

"I've heard of your goings on," he said—"of your beer-drinking and dancing. I will not have it in my parish. If you want that sort of thing you had better go to America."

"If that is intended for me, sir, I will go back to-morrow. Margaret can follow."

"It isn't the dancing, it's the drinking I'm opposed to," said the priest, turning to Bryden.

"Well, no one has drunk too much, sir," said Bryden.

"But you'll sit here drinking all night," and the priest's eyes went toward the corner where the women

had gathered, and Bryden felt that the priest looked on the women as more dangerous than the porter. "It's after midnight," he said, taking out his watch.

By Bryden's watch it was only half-past eleven, and while they were arguing about the time Mrs. Scully offered Bryden's umbrella to the priest, for in his hurry to stop the dancing the priest had gone out without his; and, as if to show Bryden that he bore him no ill-will, the priest accepted the loan of the umbrella, for he was thinking of the big marriage fee that Bryden would pay him.

"I shall be badly off for the umbrella to-morrow," Bryden said, as soon as the priest was out of the house. He was going with his father-in-law to a fair. His father-in-law was learning him how to buy and sell cattle. And his father-in-law was saying that the country was mending, and that a man might become rich in Ireland if he only had a little capital. Bryden had the capital, and Margaret had an uncle on the other side of the lake who would leave her all he had, that would be fifty pounds, and never in the village of Duncannon had a young couple begun life with so much prospect of success as would James Bryden and Margaret Dirken.

Some time after Christmas was spoken of as the best time for the marriage; James Bryden said that he would not be able to get his money out of America before the spring. The delay seemed to vex him, and he seemed anxious to be married, until one day he received a letter from America, from a man who

had served in the bar with him. This friend wrote to ask Bryden if he were coming back. The letter was no more than a passing wish to see Bryden again. Yet Bryden stood looking at it, and everyone wondered what could be in the letter. It seemed momentous, and they hardly believed him when he said it was from a friend who wanted to know if his health were better. He tried to forget the letter, and he looked at the worn fields, divided by walls of loose stones, and a great longing came upon him.

The smell of the Bowery slum had come across the Atlantic, and had found him out in this western headland; and one night he awoke from a dream in which he was hurling some drunken customer through the open doors into the darkness. He had seen his friend in his white duck jacket throwing drink from glass into glass amid the din of voices and strange accents; he had heard the clang of money as it was swept into the till, and his sense sickened for the bar-room. But how should he tell Margaret Dirken that he could not marry her? She had built her life upon this marriage. He could not tell her that he would not marry her . . . yet he must go. He felt as if he were being hunted; the thought that he must tell Margaret that he could not marry her hunted him day after day as a weasel hunts a rabbit. Again and again he went to meet her with the intention of telling her that he did not love her, that their lives were not for one another, that it had all been a mistake,

and that happily he had found out it was a mistake soon enough. But Margaret, as if she guessed what he was about to speak of, threw her arms about him and begged him to say he loved her, and that they would be married at once. He agreed that he loved her, and that they would be married at once. But he had not left her many minutes before the feeling came upon him that he could not marry her—that he must go away. The smell of the bar-room hunted him down. Was it for the sake of the money that he might make there that he wished to go back? No, it was not the money. What then? His eyes fell on the bleak country, on the little fields divided by bleak walls; he remembered the pathetic ignorance of the people, and it was these things that he could not endure. It was the priest who came to forbid the dancing. Yes, it was the priest. As he stood looking at the line of the hills the bar-room seemed by him. He heard the politicians, and the excitement of politics was in his blood again. He must go away from this place—he must get back to the bar-room. Looking up, he saw the scanty orchard, and he hated the spare road that led to the village, and he hated the little hill at the top of which the village began, and he hated more than all other places the house where he was to live with Margaret Dirken—if he married her. He could see it from where he stood—by the edge of the lake, with twenty acres of pasture land about it, for the landlord had given up part of his demesne land to them.

He caught sight of Margaret, and he called her to come through the stile.

"I have just had a letter from America."

"About the money?" she said.

"Yes, about the money. But I shall have to go over there."

He stood looking at her, seeking for words; and she guessed from his embarrassment that he would say to her that he must go to America before they were married.

"Do you mean, James, you will have to go at once?"

"Yes," he said, "at once. But I shall come back in time to be married in August. It will only mean delaying our marriage a month."

They walked on a little way talking, and every step he took James felt that he was a step nearer the Bowery slum. And when they came to the gate Bryden said:—

"I must hasten or I shall miss the train."

"But," she said, "you are not going now—you are not going to-day?"

"Yes, this morning. It is seven miles. I shall have to hurry not to miss the train."

And then she asked him if he would ever come back.

"Yes," he said, "I am coming back."

"If you are coming back, James, why not let me go with you?"

"You could not walk fast enough. We should miss the train."

"One moment, James. Don't make me suffer; tell me the truth. You are not coming back. Your clothes—where shall I send them?"

He hurried away, hoping he would come back. He tried to think that he liked the country he was leaving, that it would be better to have a farmhouse and live there with Margaret Dirken than to serve drinks behind a counter in the Bowery. He did not think he was telling her a lie when he said he was coming back. Her offer to forward his clothes touched his heart, and at the end of the road he stood and asked himself if he should go back to her. He would miss the train if he waited another minute, and he ran on. And he would have missed the train if he had not met a car. Once he was on the car he felt himself safe—the country was already behind him. The train and the boat at Cork were mere formulæ; he was already in America.

The moment he landed he felt the thrill of home that he had not found in his native village, and he wondered how it was that the smell of the bar seemed more natural than the smell of fields, and the roar of crowds more welcome than the silence of the lake's edge. He offered up a thanksgiving for his escape, and entered into negotiations for the purchase of the bar-room.

. . . . . .

He took a wife, she bore him sons and daughters, the bar-room prospered, property came and went; he grew old, his wife died, he retired from business, and

reached the age when a man begins to feel there are not many years in front of him, and that all he has had to do in life has been done. His children married, lonesomeness began to creep about him in the evening and when he looked into the fire-light, a vague, tender reverie floated up, and Margaret's soft eyes and name vivified the dusk. His wife and children passed out of mind, and it seemed to him that a memory was the only real thing he possessed, and the desire to see Margaret again grew intense. But she was an old woman, she had married, maybe she was dead. Well, he would like to be buried in the village where he was born.

There is an unchanging, silent life within every man that none knows but himself, and his unchanging, silent life was his memory of Margaret Dirken. The bar-room was forgotten and all that concerned it and the things he saw most clearly were the green hillside, and the bog lake and the rushes about it, and the greater lake in the distance, and behind it the blue line of wandering hills.

A LETTER TO ROME.

A LETTER TO ROME.

ONE morning the priest's housekeeper mentioned as she gathered up the breakfast things, that Mike Mulhare had refused to let his daughter Catherine marry James Murdoch until he had earned the price of a pig.

"This is bad news," said the priest, and he laid down the newspaper.

"And he waiting for her all the summer! Wasn't it in February last that he came out of the poor-house? And the fine cabin he has built for her! He'll be that lonesome, he'll be going to America."

"To America!" said the priest.

"Maybe it will be going back to the poor-house he'll be, for he'll never earn the price of his passage at the relief works."

The priest looked at her for a moment as if he did not catch her meaning, and then a knock came at the door, and he said:—

"The inspector is here, and there are people waiting for me."

And while he was distributing the clothes he had received from Manchester, he argued with the inspector as to the direction the new road should take; and when he came back from the relief works, there was his dinner. He was busy writing letters all the afternoon; it was not until he had handed them to the post-mistress that his mind was free to think of poor James Murdoch, who had built a cabin at the end of one of the famine roads in a hollow out of the way of the wind. From a long way off the priest could see him digging his patch of bog.

And when he caught sight of the priest he stuck his spade in the ground and came to meet him. He wore a pair of torn corduroy trousers out of which two long naked feet appeared; and there was a shirt, but it was torn, the wind thrilled in a naked breast, and the priest thought his housekeeper was right, that James must go back to the poor-house. There was a wild look in his eyes, and he seemed to the priest like some lonely animal just come out of its burrow. His mud cabin was full of peat smoke, there were pools of green water about it, but it had been dry, he said, all the summer; and he had intended to make a drain.

"It's hard luck, your reverence, and after building this house for her. There's a bit of smoke in the house now, but if I got Catherine I wouldn't be long making a chimney. I told Mike he should give Catherine a pig for her fortune, but he said he would give her a calf when I bought the pig, and

I said, 'Havn't I built a fine house and wouldn't it be a fine one to rear him in.'"

And they walked through the bog, James talking to the priest all the way, for it was seldom he had anyone to talk to.

"Now I must not take you any further from your digging."

"Sure there's time enough," said James, "amn't I there all day."

"I'll go and see Mike Mulhare myself," said the priest.

"Long life to your reverence."

"And I will try to get you the price of the pig."

"Ah, 'tis your reverence that's good to us."

The priest stood looking after him, wondering if he would give up life as a bad job and go back to the poor-house. But while thinking of James Murdoch, he was conscious of an idea; it was still dim and distant, but every moment it emerged, it was taking shape.

Ireland was passing away. In five and twenty years, if some great change did not take place, Ireland would be a Protestant country. "There is no one in this parish except myself who has a decent house to live in," he murmured; and then an idea broke suddenly in his mind. The Greek priests were married. They had been allowed to retain their wives in order to avert a schism. Rome had always known how to adapt herself to circumstances, and there was no doubt that if Rome knew Ireland's need of children

Rome would consider the revocation of the decree—the clergy must marry.

He walked very slowly, and looking through the peat stacks he saw St. Peter's rising above a rim of pearl-coloured mountains, and before he was aware of it he had begun to consider how he might write a letter to Rome. Was it not a fact that celibacy had only been made obligatory in Ireland in the twelfth century?

When he returned home, his housekeeper was anxious to hear about James Murdoch, but the priest sat possessed by the thought of Ireland becoming a Protestant country; and he had not moved out of his chair when the servant came in with his tea. He drank his tea mechanically, and walked up and down the room, and it was a long time before he took up his knitting. But that evening he could not knit, and he laid the stocking aside so that he might think Of what good would his letter be? A letter from a poor parish priest asking that one of the most ancient decrees should be revoked! The Pope's secretary would pitch his letter into the waste paper basket. The Pope would be only told of its contents! The cardinals are men whose thoughts move up and down certain narrow ways, clever men no doubt, but clever men are often the dupe of conventions. All men who live in the world accept the conventions as truths. And the idea of this change in ecclesiastical law had come to him because he lived in a waste bog.

But was he going to write the letter? He could not answer the question! Yes, he knew that sooner or later he must write this letter. "Instinct," he said, "is a surer guide than logic. My letter to Rome was a sudden revelation." The idea had fallen as it were out of the air, and now as he sat knitting by his own fire-side it seemed to come out of the corners of the room.

"When you were at Rathowen," his idea said, "you heard the clergy lament that the people were leaving the country. You heard the bishop and many eloquent men speak on the subject, but their words meant little, but on the bog road the remedy was revealed to you.

"The remedy lies with the priesthood. If each priest were to take a wife about four thousand children would be born within the year, forty thousand children would be added to the birth-rate in ten years Ireland would be saved by her priesthood!"

The truth of this estimate seemed beyond question, nevertheless, Father MacTurnan found it difficult to reconcile himself to the idea of a married clergy. One is always the dupe of prejudice. He knew that and went on thinking. The priests live in the best houses, eat the best food, wear the best clothes; they are indeed the flower of the nation, and would produce magnificent sons and daughters. And who could bring up their children according to the teaching of our holy church as well as priests?

So did his idea speak to him, unfolding itself in

rich variety every evening. Very soon he realised that other advantages would accrue, beyond the addition of forty thousand children to the birth-rate, and one advantage that seemed to him to exceed the original advantage would be the nationalisation of religion, the formation of an Irish Catholicism suited to the ideas and needs of the Irish people.

In the beginning of the century the Irish lost their language, in the middle of the century the characteristic aspects of their religion. He remembered that it was Cardinal Cullen who had denationalised religion in Ireland. But everyone recognised his mistake, and how could a church be nationalised better than by the rescission of the decree? Wives and the begetting of children would attach the priests to the soil of Ireland. It could not be said that anyone loved his country who did not contribute to its maintenance. He remembered that the priests leave Ireland on foreign missions, and he said:—"Every Catholic who leaves Ireland helps to bring about the very thing that Ireland has been struggling against for centuries—Protestantism."

This idea talked to him, and, one evening, it said, "Religion, like everything else, must be national," and it led him to contrast cosmopolitanism with parochialism. "Religion, like art, came out of parishes," he said. Some great force was behind him. He must write! He must write. . .

He dropped the ink over the table and over the paper, he jotted down his ideas in the first words that

came to him until midnight; he could see his letter in all its different parts, and when he slept it floated through his sleep.

"I must have a clear copy of it before I begin the Latin translation."

He had written the English text thinking of the Latin that would come after, and very conscious of the fact that he had written no Latin since he had left Maynooth, and that a bad translation would discredit his ideas in the eyes of the Pope's secretary, who was doubtless a great Latin scholar.

"The Irish priests have always been good Latinists," he murmured as he hunted through the dictionary.

The table was littered with books, for he had found it necessary to create a Latin atmosphere before beginning his translation. He worked principally at night, and one morning about three he finished his translation, and getting up from his chair he walked to the whitening window. His eyes pained him, and he decided he would postpone reading over what he had written till morning.

His illusions regarding his Latin were broken. He had laid his manuscript on a table by his bedside, and on awakening he had reached out his hand for it, but he had not read a page when he dropped it; and the manuscript lay on the floor while he dressed. He went into his breakfast, and when he had eaten his breakfast his nerve failed him. He could not bring himself to fetch the manuscript, and it was his housekeeper who brought it to him.

"Ah," he said, "it is tasteless as the gruel that poor James Murdoch is eating." And taking a volume from the table—"St. Augustine's Confessions"—he said, "what diet there is here!"

He stood reading. There was no idiom, he had used Latin words instead of English. At last he was interrupted by the wheels of a car stopping at his door. Father Meehan! Meehan could revise his Latin! None had written such good Latin at Maynooth as Meehan.

"My dear Meehan, this is indeed a pleasant surprise."

"I thought I'd like to see you. I drove over. But—I am not disturbing you. . . You've taken to reading again. St. Augustine! And you're writing in Latin!"

Father James's face grew red, and he took the manuscript out of his friend's hand.

"No, you mustn't look at that."

And then the temptation to ask him to overlook certain passages made him change his mind.

"I was never much of a Latin scholar."

"And you want me to overlook your Latin for you. But why are you writing Latin?"

"Because I am writing to the Pope. I was at first a little doubtful, but the more I thought of this letter the more necessary it seemed to me."

"And what are you writing to the Pope about?"

"You see Ireland is going to become a Protestant country."

"Is it?" said Father Meehan, and he listened a little while. Then, interrupting his friend, he said:—

"I've heard enough. Now, I strongly advise you not to send this letter. We have known each other all our lives. Now my dear MacTurnan——"

Father Michael talked eagerly, and Father MacTurnan sat listening. At last Father Meehan saw that his arguments were producing no effect, and he said:—

"You don't agree with me."

"It isn't that I don't agree with you. You have spoken admirably from your point of view, but our points of view are different."

"Take your papers away, burn them!"

Then, thinking his words were harsh, he laid his hand on his friend's shoulder and said:—

"My dear MacTurnan, I beg of you not to send this letter."

Father James did not answer; the silence grew painful, and Father Michael asked Father James to show him the relief works that the Government had ordered.

They walked to where the poor people were working, but important as these works were the letter to Rome seemed more important to Father Michael, and he said:—

"My good friend, there isn't a girl that would marry us; now is there? There isn't a girl in Ireland who would touch us with a forty foot pole. Would you have the Pope release the nuns from their vows?"

"I think exceptions should be made in favour of those in orders. But I think it would be for the good of Ireland if the secular clergy were married."

"That's not my point. My point is that even if the decree were rescinded we should not be able to get wives. You've been living too long in the waste, my dear friend. You've lost yourself in a dream. We shouldn't get a penny. Our parishioners would say, 'Why should we support that fellow and his family?' That's what they'd say."

"We should be poor, no doubt," said Father James. "But not so poor as our parishioners. My parishioners eat yellow meal, and I eat eggs and live in a good house."

"We are educated men, and should live in better houses."

"The greatest saints lived in deserts."

And so the argument went on until the time came to say good-bye, and then Father James said:—

"I shall be glad if you will give me a lift on your car. I want to go to the post-office."

"To post your letter?"

"The idea came to me—it came swiftly like a lightning flash, and I can't believe that it was an accident. If it had fallen into your mind with the suddenness that it fell into mine, you would believe that it was an inspiration."

"It would take a good deal to make me believe I was inspired," said Father Michael, and he watched Father James go into the post-office to register his letter.

As he went home Father James met a long string of peasants returning from their work. The last was Norah Flynn, and the priest blushed deeply. It was the first time he had looked on one of his parishioners in the light of a possible spouse; he entered his house frightened, and when he looked round his parlour he asked himself if the day would come when he should see Norah Flynn sitting opposite to him in his arm-chair. And his face flushed deeper when he looked towards the bedroom door, and he fell on his knees and prayed that God's will might be made known to him.

During the night he awoke many times, and the dream that had awakened him continued when he had left his bed, and he wandered round and round the room in the darkness, seeking a way. At last he reached the window and drew the curtain, and saw the dim dawn opening out over the bog.

"Thank God," he said, "it was only a dream—only a dream."

And lying down he fell asleep, but immediately another dream as horrible as the first appeared, and his housekeeper heard him beating on the walls.

"Only a dream, only a dream," he said.

He lay awake, not daring to sleep lest he might dream. And it was about seven o'clock when he heard his housekeeper telling him that the inspector had come to tell him they must decide what direction the new road should take. In the inspector's opinion it should run parallel with the old road. To continue

the old road two miles further would involve extra labour; the people would have to go further to their work, and the stones would have to be drawn further. The priest held that the extra labour was of secondary importance. He said that to make two roads running parallel with each other would be a wanton humiliation to the people.

But the inspector could not appreciate the priest's arguments. He held that the people were thinking only how they might earn enough money to fill their bellies.

"I don't agree with you, I don't agree with you," said the priest. "Better go in the opposite direction and make a road to the sea."

"Well, your reverence, the Government do not wish to engage upon any work that will benefit any special class. These are my instructions."

"A road to the sea will benefit no one. . . . I see you are thinking of the landlord. But there is no harbour; no boat ever comes into that flat, waste sea."

"Well, your reverence, one of these days a harbour may be made, whereas an arch would look well in the middle of the bog, and the people would not have to go far to their work."

"No, no. A road to the sea will be quite useless; but its futility will not be apparent—at least, not so apparent—and the people's hearts will not be broken."

The inspector seemed a little doubtful, but the priest assured him that the futility of the road would satisfy English ministers.

"And yet these English ministers," the priest reflected, "are not stupid men; they are merely men blinded by theory and prejudice, as all men are who live in the world. Their folly will be apparent to the next generation, and so on and so on for ever and ever, world without end."

"And the worst of it is," the priest said, "while the people are earning their living on these roads their fields will be lying idle, and there will be no crops next year."

Father MacTurnan began to think of the cardinals and the transaction of business in the Vatican; cardinals and ministers alike are the dupes of convention. Only those who are estranged from habits and customs can think straightforward.

"If, instead of insisting on these absurd roads, the Government would give me the money, I should be able to feed the people at a cost of about a penny a day, and they would be able to sow their potatoes. And if only the cardinals would consider the rescission of the decree on its merits Ireland would be saved from Protestantism."

Some cardinal was preparing an answer—an answer might be even in the post. Rome might not think his letter worthy of an answer.

A few days afterwards the inspector called to show him a letter he had just received from the Board of Works, and Father James had to write many letters and had to go to Dublin, and in the excitement of these philanthropic activities the emigration question

was forgotten. He was talking to the inspector about the possibility of obtaining a harbour when the postman handed him a letter.

"This is a letter from Father Moran. The Bishop wishes to see me. We will continue the conversation to-morrow. It is eight miles to Rathowen, and how much further is the Palace?"

"A good seven," said the inspector. "You're not going to walk it, your reverence?"

"Why not? In four hours I shall be there." He looked at his boots first, and hoped they would hold together; and then he looked at the sky, and hoped it would not rain.

The sky was dim; all the light seemed to be upon the earth; a soft, vague sunlight floated over the bog. Now and again a yellow-hammer rose above the tufts of coarse grass and flew a little way. A line of pearl-coloured mountains showed above the low horizon, and he had walked eight miles before he saw a pine-wood. Some hundred yards further on there was a green field, but under the green sod there was peat, and a man and a boy were cutting it. The heather appeared again, and he had walked ten miles before he was clear of whins and heather.

He walked on, thinking of his interview with the Bishop, and was nearly at the end of his journey when he noticed that one of his shoes had come unsewn, and he stopped at a cabin; and while the woman was looking for a needle and thread he mopped his face with a great red handkerchief that he kept in the

pocket of his threadbare coat—a coat that had once been black, but had grown green with age and weather. He had outwalked himself, and feeling he would be tired, and not well able to answer the points that the Bishop would raise, he decided to rest awhile. The woman had found some beeswax, and he stopped half an hour stitching his shoe under the hawthorn that grew beside the cabin.

He was still two miles from the Palace, and this last two miles proved very long. He arrived foot-sore and covered with dust, and he was so tired that he could hardly get up from his chair to receive Father Moran when he came into the parlour.

"You seem to have walked a long way, Father MacTurnan."

"About fifteen miles. I shall be all right presently. I suppose his Grace does not want to see me at once."

"Well, that's just it. His Grace sent me to say he would see you at once. He expected you earlier."

"I started the moment I received his Grace's letter. I suppose his Grace wishes to see me regarding my letter to Rome."

The secretary hesitated, coughed, and Father MacTurnan wondered why Father Moran looked at him so intently. He returned in a few minutes, saying that his Grace was sorry that Father MacTurnan had had so long a walk. He hoped that he would rest awhile and partake of some refreshment. . . . The servant brought in some wine and sandwiches, and

the secretary returned in half an hour. His Grace was now ready to receive him. Father Moran opened the library door, and Father MacTurnan saw the Bishop—a short, alert man, about fifty-five, with a sharp nose and grey eyes and bushy eyebrows. He popped about the room and gave his secretary many orders. Father MacTurnan wondered if the Bishop would ever finish talking to his secretary. He seemed to have finished, but a thought suddenly struck him, and he followed his secretary to the door, and Father MacTurnan began to fear that the Pope had not decided to place the Irish clergy on the same footing as the Greek clergy. If he had, the Bishop's interest in these many various matters would have subsided: his mind would be engrossed by the larger issue. On returning from the door his Grace passed Father MacTurnan without speaking to him, and going to his writing table he began to search amid his papers. At last Father MacTurnan said:—

"Maybe your Grace is looking for my letter to Rome?"

"Yes," said his Grace, "do you see it?"

"It's under your Grace's hand, those blue papers."

"Ah yes," and his Grace leaned back in his arm-chair, leaving Father MacTurnan standing.

"Won't you sit down, Father MacTurnan?" he said casually. "You've been writing to Rome, I see, advocating the revocation of the decree of celibacy. There's no doubt the emigration of Catholics is a very serious question. So far you have got the

sympathy of Rome, and, I may say of myself; but am I to understand that it was your fear for the religious safety of Ireland that prompted you to write this letter?"

"What other reason could there be?"

Nothing was said for a long while, and then the Bishop's meaning began to break in his mind; his face flushed, and he grew confused.

"I hope your Grace doesn't think for a moment that——.

"I only want to know if there is anyone—if your eyes ever went in a certain direction, if your thoughts ever said, 'Well, if the decree is revoked——'"

"No, your Grace, no. Celibacy has been no burden to me—far from it. Sometimes I feared that it was celibacy that attracted me to the priesthood. Celibacy was a gratification rather than a sacrifice."

"I am glad," said the Bishop, and he spoke slowly and emphatically, "that this letter was prompted by such impersonal motives."

"Surely, your Grace, His Holiness did not suspect——"

The Bishop murmured an euphonious Italian name, and Father MacTurnan understood that he was speaking of one of the Pope's secretaries.

"More than once," said Father MacTurnan, "I feared that if the decree were revoked, I should not have had sufficient courage to comply with it."

And then he told the Bishop how he had met Norah Flynn on the road. An amused

expression stole into the Bishop's face, and his voice changed.

"I presume you do not contemplate making marriage obligatory; you do not contemplate the suspension of the faculties of those who do not take wives?"

"It seems to me that exception should be made in favour of those in orders, and, of course in favour of those who have reached a certain age like your Grace."

The Bishop coughed, and pretended to look for some paper which he had mislaid.

"This was one of the many points that I discussed with Father Michael Meehan."

"Oh, so you consulted Father Meehan," the Bishop said, looking up.

"He came in one day I was reading over my Latin translation before posting it. I'm afraid the ideas that I submitted to the consideration of His Holiness have been degraded by my very poor Latin. I should have wished Father Meehan to overlook my Latin, but he refused. He begged of me not to send the letter."

"Father Meehan," said his Grace, "is a great friend of yours. Yet nothing he could say could shake your resolution to write to Rome?"

"Nothing," said Father MacTurnan. "The call I received was too distinct and too clear for me to hesitate."

"Tell me about this call."

Father MacTurnan told the Bishop that the poor

man had come out of the workhouse because he wanted to be married, and that Mike Mulhare would not give him his daughter until he had earned the price of a pig. "And as I was talking to him I heard my conscience say, 'No one can afford to marry in Ireland but the clergy.' We all live better than our parishioners."

And then, forgetting the Bishop, and talking as if he were alone with his God, he described how the conviction had taken possession of him—that Ireland would become a Protestant country if the Catholic emigration did not cease. And he told how this conviction had left him little peace until he had written his letter.

The priest talked on until he was interrupted by Father Moran.

"I have some business to transact with Father Moran now," the Bishop said, "but you must stay to dinner. You have walked a long way, and you are tired and hungry."

"But, your Grace, if I don't start now, I shall not get home until nightfall."

"A car will take you back, Father MacTurnan. I will see to that. I must have some exact information about your poor people. We must do something for them."

Father MacTurnan and the Bishop were talking together when the car came to take Father MacTurnan home, and the Bishop said:—

"Father MacTurnan, you have borne the loneliness of your parish a long while."

"Loneliness is only a matter of habit. I think, your Grace, I'm better suited to the place than I am for any other. I don't wish any change, if your Grace is satisfied with me."

"No one will look after the poor people better than yourself, Father MacTurnan. But," he said. "it seems to me there is one thing we have forgotten. You haven't told me if you succeeded in getting the money to buy the pig."

Father MacTurnan grew very red . . . "I had forgotten it. The relief works——"

"It's not too late. Here's five pounds, and this will buy him a pig."

"It will indeed," said the priest, "it will buy him two!"

He had left the palace without having asked the Bishop how his letter had been received at Rome, and he stopped the car, and was about to tell the driver to go back. But no matter, he would hear about his letter some other time. He was bringing happiness to two poor people, and he could not persuade himself to delay their happiness by one minute. He was not bringing one pig, but two pigs, and now Mike Mulhare would have to give him Norah and a calf; and the priest remembered that James Murdoch had said—"What a fine house this will be to rear them in." There were many who thought that human beings and animals should not live together; but after all, what did it matter if they were happy? And the priest forgot his letter to Rome in the thought of

the happiness he was bringing to two poor people. He could not see Norah Mulhare that night; but he drove down to the famine road, and he and the driver called till they awoke James Murdoch. The poor man came stumbling across the bog, and the priest told him the news.

JULIA CAHILL'S CURSE.

JULIA CAHILL'S CURSE.

IN '95 I was agent of the Irish Industrial Society and I spent three days with Father O'Hara making arrangements for the establishment of looms, for the weaving of home spuns and for acquiring plots of ground whereon to build schools where the village, girls could practice lace-making.

The priest was one of the chief supporters of our movement. He was a wise and tactful man, who succeeded not only in living on terms of friendship with one of the worst landlords in Ireland, but in obtaining many concessions from him. When he came to live in Culloch the landlord had said to him that what he would like to do would be to run the ploughshare through the town, and to turn "Culloch" into Bullock. But before many years had passed Father O'Hara had persuaded this man to use his influence to get a sufficient capital to start a bacon factory. And the town of Culloch possessed no other advantages except an energetic and foreseeing parish priest. It was not a railway terminus, nor was it a seaport.

But, perhaps because of his many admirable qualities, Father O'Hara is not the subject of this story. We find stories in the lives of the weak and the foolish, and the improvident, and his name occurs here because he is typical of not a few priests I have met in Ireland.

I left him early one Sunday morning, and he saying that twenty odd miles lay before me, and my first stopping place would be Ballygliesane, that I could hear Mass there at Father Madden's chapel, and after Mass I could call upon him, and that when I had explained the objects of our Society I could drive to Rathowen, where there was a great gathering of the clergy. All the priests within ten miles round would be there for the consecration of the new church.

On an outside car one divides one's time in moralizing on the state of the country or in chatting with the driver, and as the driver seemed somewhat taciturn I examined the fields as we passed them. They were scanty fields, drifting from thin grass into bog, and from bog into thin grass again, and in the distance there was a rim of melancholy mountains, and the peasants I saw along the road seemed a counterpart of the landscape. "The land has made them," I said, "according to its own image and likeness," and I tried to find words to define the yearning that I read in their eyes as we drove past. But I could find no words that satisfied me.

"Only music can express their yearning, and they have written it themselves in their folk tunes."

My driver's eyes were the eyes that one meets everywhere in Ireland, pale, wandering eyes that the land seems to create, and I wondered if his character corresponded to his eyes; and with a view to finding if it did I asked him some questions about Father Madden. He seemed unwilling to talk, but I soon began to see that his silence was the result of shyness rather than dislike of conversation. He was a gentle, shy lad, and I told him that Father O'Hara had said I would see the loneliest parish in Ireland.

"It's true for him," he answered, and again there was silence. At the end of a mile I asked him if the land in Father Madden's parish was poor, and he said no, it was the best land in the country, and then I was certain that there was some mystery attached to Father Madden.

"The road over there is the mearing."

And soon after passing this road I noticed that although the land was certainly better than the land about Culloch, there seemed to be very few people on it; and what was more significant than the untilled fields were the ruins, for they were not the cold ruins of twenty, or thirty, or forty years ago when the people were evicted and their tillage turned into pasture, but the ruins of cabins that had been lately abandoned. Some of the roof trees were still unbroken, and I said that the inhabitants must have left voluntarily.

"Sure they did. Arn't we all going to America."

"Then it was not the landlord?"

"Ah, it's the landlord who'd have them back if he could."

"And the priest? How does he get his dues?"

"Those on the other side are always sending their money to their friends and they pay the priest. Sure why should we be staying? Isn't the most of us over there already. It's more like going home than leaving home."

I told him we hoped to establish new looms in the country, and that Father O'Hara had promised to help us.

"Father O'Hara is a great man," he said.

"Well, don't you think that with the revival of industries the people might be induced to stay at home?"

"Sorra stay," said he.

I could see that he was not so convinced about the depopulation of Father O'Hara's parish as he was about Father Madden's, and I tried to induce him to speak his mind.

"Well, your honour, there's many that think there's a curse on the parish."

"A curse! And who put the curse on the parish?"

"Isn't that the bell ringing for Mass, your honour?"

And listening I could hear a doleful pealing in the grey sky.

"Does Father Madden know of this curse?"

"Indeed he does; none better."

"And does he believe in it?"

"There's many who will tell you that he has been saying Masses for the last ten years, that the curse may be taken off the parish."

We could now hear the bell tolling quite distinctly, and the driver pointed with his whip, and I could see the cross above the fir trees.

"And there," he said, "is Bridget Coyne," and I saw a blind woman being led along the road. At the moment I supposed he had pointed the woman out because she was blind, though this did not seem a sufficient reason for the note of wonder in his voice; but we were within a few yards of the chapel and there was no time to ask him who Bridget Coyne was. I had to speak to him about finding stabling for the horse. That, he said, was not necessary. He would let the horse graze in the chapel-yard while he himself knelt by the door, so that he could hear Mass and keep an eye on his horse. "I shall want you half an hour after Mass is over." Half an hour, I thought, would suffice to explain the general scope of our movement to Father Madden. I had found that the best way was to explain to each priest in turn the general scope of the movement, and then to pay a second visit a few weeks later. The priest would have considered the ideas that I had put into his head, he would have had time to assimilate them in the interval, and I could generally tell in the second visit if I should find in him a friend, an enemy, or an indifferent.

There was something extraordinary in the appearance of Father Madden's church, a few peasants crouched here and there, and among them I saw the blind woman that the driver had pointed out on the road. She did not move during Mass; she knelt or crouched with her shawl drawn over her head, and it was not until the acolyte rang the communion bell that she dared to lift herself up. That day she was the only communicant, and the acolyte did not turn the altar cloth over the rails, he gave her a little bit of the cloth to hold, and, holding it firmly in her fingers, she lifted up her blind face, and when the priest placed the Host on her tongue she sank back overcome.

"This blind woman," I said to myself, "will be the priest's last parishioner," and I saw the priest saying Mass in a waste church for the blind woman, everyone else dead or gone.

All her days I said are spent by the cabin fire hearing of people going to America, her relations, her brothers and sisters had gone, and every seventh day she is led to hear Mass, to receive the Host, and to sink back. To-day and to-morrow and the next day will be spent brooding over her happiness, and in the middle of the week she will begin to look forward to the seventh day.

The blind woman seemed strangely symbolical and the parish, the priest too. A short, thick-set man, with a large bald head and a fringe of reddish hair; his hands were fat and short, the nails were bitten

the nose was fleshy and the eyes were small, and when he turned towards the people and said "*Pax Vobiscum*," there was a note of command in his voice. The religion he preached was one of fear. His sermon was filled with flames and gridirons, and ovens and devils with pitchforks, and his parishioners groaned and shook their heads and beat their breasts.

I did not like Father Madden or his sermon. I remembered that there were few young people left in his parish, and it seemed waste of time to appeal to him for help in establishing industries; but it was my business to seek the co-operation of every priest, and I could not permit myself such a licence as the passing over of any priest. What reason could I give? that I did not like his sermon or his bald head? And after Mass I went round to see him in the sacristy.

The sacristy was a narrow passage, and there were two acolytes in it, and the priest was taking off his vestments, and people were knocking constantly at the door, and the priest had to tell the acolyte what answer to give. I had only proposed to myself to sketch the objects of our organization in a general outline to the priest, but it was impossible even to do this, so numerous were the interruptions. When I came to unfold our system of payments, the priest said :—

"It is impossible for me to listen to you here. You had better come round with me to my house."

The invitation was not quite in accordance with

the idea I had formed of the man, and while walking across the fields he asked me if I would have a cup of tea with him, and we spoke of the new church at Rathowen. It seemed legitimate to deplore the building of new churches, and I mentioned that while the churches were increasing the people were decreasing, and I ventured to regret that only two ideas seemed to obtain in Ireland, the idea of the religious vocation and the idea of emigration.

"I see," said Father Madden," you are imbued with all the new ideas."

"But," I said, "you don't wish the country to disappear."

"I do not wish it to disappear," he said, "but if it intends to disappear we can do nothing to prevent it from disappearing. Everyone is opposed to emigration now, but I remember when everyone was advocating it. Teach them English and emigrate them was the cure. "Now," he said, "you wish them to learn Irish and to stay at home. And you are quite certain that this time you have found out the true way. I live very quiet down here, but I hear all the new doctrines. Besides teaching Paddy Durkin to feed his pig, I hear you are going to revive the Gothic. Music and literature are to follow, and among these resurrections there is a good deal of talk about pagan Ireland."

We entered a comfortable, well-furnished cottage, with a good carpet on the floor, and the walls lined with books, and on either side of the fireplace there

were easy chairs, and I thought of the people "on the other side."

He took a pot of tea from the hob, and said :—

"Now let me pour you out a cup of tea, and you shall tell me about the looms."

"But," I said, "Father Madden, you don't believe much in the future of Ireland, you don't take very kindly to new ideas."

"New ideas! Every ten years there is a new set. If I had said teach them Irish ten years ago I should have been called a fool, and now if I say teach them English and let them go to America I am called a reactionist. You have come from Father O'Hara;" I could see from the way he said the name that the priests were not friends; "and he has told you a great many of my people have gone to America. And perhaps you heard him say that they have not gone to America for the sake of better wages but because my rule is too severe, because I put down cross-road dances. Father O'Hara and I think differently, and I have no doubt he thinks he is quite right."

While we breakfasted Father Madden said some severe things about Father O'Hara, about the church he had built, and the debt that was still upon it.

I suppose my face told Father Madden of the interest I took in his opinions, for during breakfast he continued to speak his mind very frankly on all the subjects I wished to hear him speak on, and when breakfast was over I offered him a cigar and proposed that we should go for a walk on his lawn.

"Yes," he said, "there are people who think I am a reactionist because I put down the ball-alley."

"The ball-alley!"

"There used to be a ball-alley by the church but the boys wouldn't stop playing ball during Mass, so I put it down. But you will excuse me a moment." The priest darted off, and I saw him climb down the wall into the road; he ran a little way along the road calling at the top of his voice, and when I got to the wall I saw him coming back. "Let me help you," I said. I pulled him up and we continued our walk; and as soon as he had recovered his breath he told me that he had caught sight of a boy and girl loitering.

"And I hunted them home."

I asked him why, knowing well the reason, and he said:—

"Young people should not loiter along the roads. I don't want bastards in my parish."

It seemed to me that perhaps bastards were better than no children at all, even from a religious point of view—one can't have religion without life, and bastards may be saints.

"In every country," I said, "boys and girls walk together, and the only idealism that comes into the lives of peasants is between the ages of eighteen and twenty, when young people meet in the lanes and linger by the stiles. Afterwards hard work in the fields kills aspiration."

"The idealism of the Irish people does not go into sex, it goes into religion."

"But religion does not help to continue the race, and we're anxious to preserve the race, otherwise there will be no religion, or a different religion in Ireland."

"That is not certain."

Later on I asked him if the people still believed in fairies. He said that traces of such beliefs survived among the mountain folk.

"There is a great deal of Paganism in the language they wish to revive, though it may be as free from Protestantism as Father O'Hara says it is."

For some reason or other I could see that folk lore was distasteful to him, and he mentioned casually that he had put a stop to the telling of fairy tales round the fire in the evening, and the conversation came to a pause.

"Now I won't detain you much longer, Father Madden. My horse and car are waiting for me. You will think over the establishment of looms. You don't want the country to disappear."

"No, I don't. And though I do not think the establishment of workrooms an unmixed blessing I will help you. You must not believe all Father O'Hara says."

The horse began to trot, and I to think. He had said that the idealism of the Irish peasant goes into other things than sex.

"If this be true, the peasant is doomed," I said to myself, and I remembered that Father Madden would not admit that religion is dependent on life, and I pondered. In this country religion is hunting life to

the death. In other countries religion has managed to come to terms with Life. In the South men and women indulge their flesh and turn the key on religious inquiry; in the North men and women find sufficient interest in the interpretation of the Bible and the founding of new religious sects. One can have faith or morals, both together seem impossible. Remembering how the priest had chased the lovers, I turned to the driver and asked if there was no courting in the country.

"There used to be courting," he said, "but now it is not the custom of the country any longer."

"How do you make up your marriages?"

"The marriages are made by the parents, and I've often seen it that the young couple did not see each other until the evening before the wedding—sometimes not until the very morning of the wedding. Many a marriage I've seen broken off for a half a sovereign—well," he said, "if not for half a sovereign, for a sovereign. One party will give forty-nine pounds and the other party wants fifty, and they haggle over that pound, and then the boy's father will say, "Well if you won't give the pound you can keep the girl."

"But do none of you ever want to walk out with a young girl?" I said.

"We're like other people, sir. We would like it well enough, but it isn't the custom of the country, and if we did it we would be talked about."

I began to like my young carman, and his answer to my question pleased me as much as any answer

he had yet given me, and I told him that Father Madden objected to the looms because they entailed meetings, etc., and if he were not present the boys would talk on subjects they should not talk about.

"Now, do you think it is right for a priest to prevent men from meeting to discuss their business?" I said, turning to the driver, determined to force him into an expression of opinion.

"It isn't because he thinks the men would talk about things they should not talk about that he is against an organization. Didn't he tell your honour that things would have to take their course. That is why he will do nothing, because he knows well enough that everyone in the parish will have to leave it, that every house will have to fall. Only the chapel will remain standing, and the day will come when Father Tom will say Mass to the blind woman and to no one else. Did you see the blind woman to-day at Mass, sir, in the right-hand corner, with the shawl over her head?"

"Yes," I said, "I saw her. If any one is a saint, that woman seems to be one."

"Yes, sir, she is a very pious woman, and her piety is so well known that she is the only one who dared to brave Father Madden; she was the only one who dared to take Julia Cahill to live with her. It was Julia who put the curse on the parish."

"A curse! But you are joking."

"No, your honour, there was no joke in it. I was only telling you what must come. She put her curse

on the village twenty years ago, and every year a roof has fallen in and a family has gone away."

"And you believe that all this happens on account of Julia's curse?"

"To be sure I do," he said. He flicked his horse pensively with the whip, and my disbelief seemed to disincline him for further conversation.

"But," I said, "who is Julia Cahill, and how did she get the power to lay a curse upon the village? Was she a young woman or an old one?"

"A young one, sir."

"How did she get the power?"

"Didn't she go every night into the mountains? She was seen one night over yonder, and the mountains are ten miles off, and whom would she have gone to see except the fairies? And who could have given her the power to curse the village?"

"But who saw her in the mountains? She would never walk so far in one evening."

"A shepherd saw her, sir."

"But he may have been mistaken."

"He saw her speaking to some one, and nobody for the last two years that she was in this village dared to speak to her but the fairies and the old woman you saw at Mass to-day, sir."

"Now, tell me about Julia Cahill; what did she do?"

"It is said, sir, she was the finest girl in these parts. I was only a gossoon at the time, about eight or nine, but I remember that she was tall, sir, nearly

as tall as you are, and she was as straight as one of those poplar trees," he said, pointing to three trees that stood against the sky. "She walked with a little swing in her walk, so that all the boys, I have, heard, who were grown up used to look after her and she had fine black eyes, sir, and she was nearly always laughing. This was the time when Father Madden came to the parish. There was courting in it then, and every young man and every young woman made their own marriages, and their marriages were made at the cross-road dancing, and in the summer evenings under the hedges. There was no dancer like Julia; they used to gather about to see her dance, and whoever walked with her under the hedges in the summer, could never think about another woman. The village was fairly mad about her, many a fight there was over her, so I suppose the priest was right. He had to get rid of her; but I think he might not have been so hard upon her as he was. It is said that he went down to her house one evening; Julia's people were well-to-do people; they kept a shop; you might have seen it as we came along the road, just outside of the village it is. And when he came in there was one of the richest farmers in the country who was trying to get Julia for his wife. Instead of going to Julia, he had gone to the father. There are two counters in the shop, and Julia was at the other, and she had made many a good pound for her parents in that shop; and he said to the father: 'Now, what fortune are you going to give with

Julia ?' And the father said there was many a man who would take her without any, and Julia was listening quietly all the while at the opposite counter. The man who had come to marry her did not know what a spirited girl she was, and he went on till he got the father to say that he would give £70, and, thinking he had got him so far, he said, 'Julia will never cross my doorway unless you give her £80.' Julia said never a word, she just sat there listening, and it was then that the priest came in. He listened for a while, and then he went over to Julia and said, 'Are you not proud to hear that you will have such a fine fortune?' And he said, 'I shall be glad to see you married. I would marry you for nothing, for I cannot have any more of your goings-on in my parish. You're the beginning of the dancing and courting here; the ball alley, too—I am going to put all that down.' Julia did not answer a single word to him, and he went over to them that were disputing about the £80, and he said, 'Now, why not make it £75,' and the father agreed to that, since the priest said it, and the three men thought the marriage was settled. And Father Tom thought that he would get not less than £10 for the marrying of her. They did not even think to ask her, and little did they think what she was going to say, and what she said was that she would not marry any one until it pleased herself, and that she would pick a man out of this parish or out of the next that pleased her. Her husband should marry her, and not so many pounds to be paid when

they signed the book or when the first baby was born. This is how marriages are settled now. Well, sir, the priest went wild when he heard Julia speak like this; he had only just come to the parish, and did not know how self-minded Julia was. Her father did, though, and he said nothing; he let Julia and the priest fight it out, and he said to the man who had come to marry her, 'My good man, you can go your way; you will never get her, I can tell that. And the priest was heard saying, 'Do you think I am going to let you go on turning the head of every boy in the parish? Do you think I am going to see fighting and quarrelling for you? Do you think I am going to see you first with one boy and then with the other? Do you think I am going to hear stories like I heard last week about poor Peter Carey, who, they say, has gone out of his mind on account of your treatment? No,' he said, 'I will have no more of you; I will have you out of my parish, or I will have you married.' Julia tossed her head, and her father got frightened. He promised the priest that she should walk no more with the young men in the evenings, for he thought he could keep her at home; but he might just as well have promised the priest to tie up the winds. Julia was out the same evening with a young man, and the priest saw her; and next evening she was out with another, and the priest saw her; and not a bit minded was she at the end of the month to marry any of them. It is said that he went down to speak to her a second time, and again a

third time; it is said that she laughed at him. After that there was nothing for him to do but to speak against her from the altar. The old people say there were some terrible things in the sermon. I have heard it said that the priest called her the evil spirit that sets men mad. I don't suppose Father Madden intended to say so much, but once he is started the words come pouring out. The people did not understand half of what he said, but they were very much frightened, and I think more frightened at what they did not understand than at what they did. Soon after that the neighbours began to be afraid to go to buy anything in Cahill's shop; even the boys who were most mad after Julia were afraid to speak to her, and her own father put her out. No one in the parish would speak to her; they were all afraid of Father Madden. If it had not been for the blind woman you saw in the chapel to-day, sir, she would have had to go to the poorhouse. The blind woman has a little cabin at the edge of the bog, and there Julia lived. She remained for nearly two years, and had hardly any clothes on her back, but she was beautiful for all that, and the boys, as they came back, sir, from the market used to look towards the little cabin in the hopes of catching sight of her. They only looked when they thought they were not watched, for the priest still spoke against her. He tried to turn the blind woman against Julia, but he could not do that; the blind woman kept her until money came from America. Some say that she went

to America; some say that she joined the fairies. But one morning she surely left the parish. One morning Pat Quinn heard somebody knocking at his window, somebody asking if he would lend his cart to take somebody to the railway station. It was five o'clock in the morning, and Pat was a heavy sleeper, and he would not get up, and it is said that she walked barefooted all the way to the station, and that is a good ten miles."

"But you said something about a curse."

"Yes, sir, a man who was taking some sheep to the fair saw her: there was a fair that day. He saw her standing at the top of the road. The sun was just above the hill, and looking back she cursed the village, raising both hands, sir, up to the sun, and since that curse was spoken, every year a roof has fallen in."

There was no doubt that the boy believed what he had told me; I could see that he liked to believe the story, that it was natural and sympathetic to him to believe in it; and for the moment I, too, believed in a dancing girl becoming the evil spirit of a village that would not accept her delight.

"He has sent away Life," I said to myself, "and now they are following Life. It is Life they are seeking."

"It is said, your honour, that she's been seen in America, and I am going there this autumn. You may be sure I will keep a look out for her."

"But all this is twenty years ago. You will not know her. A woman changes a good deal in twenty years."

"There will be no change in her, your honour. She has been with the fairies. But, sir, we shall be just in time to see the clergy come out of the cathedral after the consecration," he said, and he pointed to the town.

It stood in the middle of a flat country, and as we approached it the great wall of the cathedral rose above dirty and broken cottages, and great masses of masonry extended from the cathedral into the town; and these were the nunnery, its schools and laundry; altogether they seemed like one great cloud.

"When," I said, "will a ray from the antique sun break forth and light up this country again?"

A PLAY-HOUSE IN THE WASTE.

A PLAY-HOUSE IN THE WASTE.

I HAD arranged to stay with Father McTurnan till Monday, and had driven many miles along the road that straggles like a grey thread through the brown bog. On either side there were bog holes, and great ruts in the road, the horse shied frequently, and once I was preparing to leap from the car but the driver assured me that the old horse would not leave the road.

"Only once he was near leaving the road, and the wheel of the car must have gone within an inch of the bog hole. It was the day before Christmas Day, and I was driving the doctor; he saw something, a small white thing gliding along the road, and he was that scared that the hair rose up and went through his cap."

I could not tell from the driver's face whether he was aware of his extravagant speech. He seemed to have already forgotten what he had said, and we drove on through the bog till the dismal distant mountains, and the cry of a plover forced me to speak again.

"All this parish then," I said, "is Father McTurnan's."

"Every mile of it, sir," he said, "every mile of it, and we see him riding along the roads on his bicycle going to sick calls buttoned up in his old coat."

"Do you often come this way?"

"Not very often, sir. No one lives here except the poor people, and the priest, and the doctor. It is the poorest parish in Ireland, and every third or fourth year there's a famine, and they would have died long ago if it had not been for Father James."

"And how does he help them?"

"Isn't he always writing letters to the Government asking for relief works. Do you see those bits of roads? They are the relief works."

"Where do those roads lead to?"

"Nowhere. The road stops in the middle of the bog when the money is out."

"But," I said, "surely it would be better if the money were spent upon permanent improvements, on drainage, for instance."

The boy did not answer; he called to his horse and I had to press him for an answer.

"There's no fall, sir."

"And the bog is too big," I added, in hope of encouraging conversation.

"Faith it is, sir."

"But we are not very far from the sea, are we?"

"About a couple of miles."

"Well then," I said, "couldn't a harbour be made."

"They were thinking about that, but there's no depth of water, and the engineer said it would be cheaper to send the people to America. Everyone's against emigration now, but the people can't live here."

"So there is no hope," I said, "for home industries, weaving, lace-making."

"I won't say that."

"But has it been tried?"

"The candle do be burning in the priest's window till one in the morning, and he sitting up thinking of plans to keep the people at home. Do you see that house, sir, fornint my whip at the top of the hill?" I said I did. "Well, that's the play-house that he built."

"A playhouse," I said.

"Yes, sir, Father James hoped that people might come from Dublin to see it. No play like it had ever been acted in Ireland before sir."

"This carman of mine," I said to myself, "is an extraordinary fellow, he has got a story about everyone, he is certainly a legitimate descendant of the old bards," and I leaned across the car and said to him:

"And was the play performed?"

"No sir. The priest had been learning them all the summer, but the autumn was on them before they had got it by rote and a wind came and blew down one of the walls."

"And couldn't Father McTurnan get the money to build it up?"

"Sure, he might have got the money, but where would be the use when there was no luck in it."

"And who were to act the play?"

"The girls and boys in the parish, and the prettiest girl in all the parish was to play Good Deeds."

"So it was a miracle play," I said.

"Do you see that man there, sir? That's the priest coming out of James Burke's cabin."

We should overtake Father McTurnan in a minute or more. There was no time to hear the story, and I was sorry not to have heard the story of the play-house from the car driver. Father McTurnan got up beside me and told me we were about a mile from his house, and that he had dinner for me. He was a tall thin man, and his pale wandering eyes reflected the melancholy of the distant mountains.

"I hope," said the priest, "that you're not wet; we have had some showers here."

"We were caught in a shower coming out of Rathowen, but nothing to signify."

Our talk then turned on the consecration of the cathedral. I told him everything I thought would interest him, but all the while I was thinking what kind of house he lived in; I had only seen mud huts for many a mile; presently he pointed with his umbrella and I saw a comfortable whitewashed cottage by the roadside. The idea of the play-house was ringing in my head and I began to wonder why he did not train a rose bush against its wall; and

a moment after I felt that it was well that he did not, facing that waste hill a rose bush could only seem incongruous. We passed into the house and, seeing the priest's study lined with books, I said, "reading is his distraction," and I looked forward to a pleasant talk about books when we had finished our business talk; "and he'll tell me about the play-house," I said. After dinner, when we had said all we had to say on the possibilities of establishing local industries, the priest got up suddenly—I thought he was going to take a book from the shelves to show me, but he had gone to fetch his knitting, and, without a word of explanation, he began to knit. I saw that he was knitting stockings, and, from the rapidity that the needles went to and fro, I guessed that he knitted every evening. It may have been only my fancy, but it seemed to me that the priest answered the questions I addressed to him about his books perfunctorily; it even seemed to me that he wished to avoid literary conversation. Yielding to his wish, or what I believed to be his wish, I spoke of practical things, saying that the worst feature of the case was that the Irish no longer cared to live in Ireland.

"Even the well-to-do want to go away. The people are weary of the country, they have suffered too much. I think that they wish to lose themselves."

"It will be a pity," the priest said.

"A sort of natural euthanasia," I said. "A wish to forget themselves."

"It will be a pity," the priest said again, and he began to speak of the seventh century when Ireland had a religion of her own, an art of her own, and a literature of her own.

We drew our chairs closer to the fire, and we spoke of the Cross of Cong and Cormac's Chapel, and began to mourn the race as is customary in these times.

"The Celt is melting like snow, he lingers in little patches in the corners of the field, and hands are stretched from every side, for it is human to stretch hands to fleeting things, but as well might we try to retain the snow."

But as I grew despondent the priest grew hopeful, "no fine race has ever been blotted out." "His eyes," I said, "are as melancholy as the mountains, but nature has destined him to bring hope to the hopeless," and my delight in his character caused me to forget to ask him about the play-house. He had started a school for lace-making, but instead of keeping them at home it had helped them to emigrate; I said that this was the worst feature of the case, but the priest found excellent reasons for thinking that the weaving industry would prove more remunerative; he was sure that if the people could only make a slight livelihood in their own country they would not want to leave it. He instanced Ireland in the eighteenth century—the population had been killed off until only two millions remained, and in the nineteenth century the population stood at eight millions. I listened, letting the priest talk on, delighting

in his incurable optimism, and when the servant opened the door and told the priest he was wanted I saw him put on his old coat grown green with age; I said to myself, "no man in the world is better at his own job than this one, hope is what they want;" and returning to the study after seeing him off I stopped suddenly, seeing his eyes filled with kindness as he sat by the death-bed, and hearing his kind wisdom.

That day I had seen a woman digging in a patch of bog under the grey sky. She wore a red petticoat, a handkerchief was tied round her head, and the moment she caught sight of us she flung down the spade and ran to the hovel, and a man appeared with a horn, and he blew the horn, running to the brow of the hill. I asked the driver the reason of their alarm, and he told me that we had been mistaken for the bailiff. This was true, for I saw two little sheep hardly bigger than geese driven away. There was a pool of green water about this hovel, and all the hovels in the district were the same—one-roomed hovels, full of peat smoke, and on the hearth a black iron pot, with traces of some yellow meal stirabout in it. The dying man or woman would be lying in a corner on some straw, and the priest would speak a little Irish to these outcast Celts, "to those dim people who wander like animals through the waste," I said.

"The grey sky has blown over these people for so many generations that it has left them bare as the hills. A play-house for these people! What defiance of nature's law! And watching the shapely sods of turf

melting into white ash I thought of the dim people building the playhouse, obedient to the priest, unsuspicious of a new idea. A play-house must have seemed to them as useless as a road that leads nowhere. The priest told them that people would come to see the play, but the idea of pleasure did not find a way into their minds? The play-house had fallen!"

I piled more turf on the fire; the priest did not return, and the moaning of the wind put strange fancies into my head. My driver had spoken of a small white thing gliding along the road, and I regretted I had not asked him more about the apparition, if it were an apparition. A little later I wondered why the priest knitted. "His room is lined with books. He does not read, he knits, a strange occupation! He never talks about books."

I crossed the room, to investigate the mystery and I discovered a heap of woollen stockings. "All these he has knitted. But some strange story hangs about him," I said, and I lay awake a long while thinking of the people I should meet on the morrow.

And never shall I forget the spectacle. There are degrees in poverty, and I remember two men: their feet were bare, and their shirts were so torn that the curling breast hair was uncovered. They wore brown beards, and their skin was yellow with famine, and one of them cried out: "The white sun of Heaven does not shine upon two poorer men than upon this man and myself." After the meeting they followed us, and the poor people seemed to me

strangely anxious to tell of their condition. There were some women among them; they were kept back by the men, and they quarrelled among themselves, disputing who should talk to me. They had seen no one except each other for a long time, and I feared their interest in the looms was a conversational interest—it amused them to talk.

The priest brought a bundle of clothes out of the house, and when the distribution was finished, I asked him to come for a walk up the hill and show me the play-house.

Again he hesitated, and I said: "You must come, Father McTurnan, for a walk. You must forget the misfortunes of those people for a while." He yielded, and we spoke of the excellence of the road, and he told me that when he had conceived the idea of a play-house, he had arranged with the inspector that the road should go to the top of the hill.

"It will not make much difference," he said, "for if there is ever a harbour made the road can be carried over the hill right down to the sea, and the hill, as you say, is not a very steep one."

"There must be a fine view from the hill top, and no doubt you often go there to read your breviary."

"During the building of the play-house I often used to be up here, and during the rehearsals I was here every day."

I noticed that the tone of his voice never altered.

A grey, shallow sea had slowly eaten away the rotten land, and the embay was formed by two low

headlands hardly showing above the water at high tide.

"I thought once," said the priest, "that if the play were a great success a line of flat-bottomed steamers might be built."

"Pleasant dreams," I said to myself, "and he sitting here in the quiet evenings, reading his breviary, dreaming of a line of steamships crowded with visitors. He has been reading about the Oberammergau performances, I said to myself, and I spoke about these performances, agreeing with him that no one would have dared to predict that visitors would come from all sides of Europe to see a few peasants performing a miracle play in the Tyrol.

"Come," I said, "into the play-house. Let me see how you built it."

The building was finished! The walls and the roof were finished, and a stage had been erected at the end of the building. But half a wall and some of the roof had fallen upon it, and the rubble had not been cleared away.

"It would not cost many pounds to repair the damage," I said. "And having gone so far you should give the play a chance."

I was anxious to hear if he had discovered any aptitude for acting among the girls and the boys who lived in the cabins.

"I think," said the priest, "that the play would have been very fairly acted, and I think that, with a little practice, we might have done as well as they did at Oberammergau."

But he was more willing to discuss the play that he had chosen than the talents of those who were going to perform it, and he told me that it had been written in the fourteenth century in Latin, and that he himself had translated it into Irish.

"I wonder if it would have been possible to organise an excursion from Dublin. If the performance had been judiciously advertised—'Oberammergau in the West.'"

"I used to think," said he, "it is eight miles from Rathowen, and the road is a bad one, and when they got here there would be no place for them to stay; they would have to go all the way back again, and that would be sixteen miles."

"Yet it was as well to build this play-house as to make a useless road—a road leading nowhere. While they were building this play-house they thought they were accomplishing something. Never before did the poor people do anything, except for bare life. Do you know, Father McTurnan, your play-house touches me to the heart?" and I turned and looked. "Once pleasure hovered over your parish, but the bird did not alight! Let me start a subscription for you in Dublin!"

"I don't think," said the priest, "that it would be possible——"

"Not for me to get fifty pounds?"

"Yes," he said, "you might get the money, but I don't think we could ever get up a performance of the play."

"And why not?" I said.

"You see the wind came and blew down the wall, and I think they look upon that wind as a manifestation of God's disapproval. The people are very pious, and, looking back, I think they felt that the time they spent in rehearsing might have been better spent. The idea of amusement shocks those who are not accustomed to the idea. The play-house disturbed them in their ideas. They hear Mass on Sundays, and there are the Sacraments, and they remember that they have to die. It used to seem to me a very sad thing to see all the people going to America; it seemed to me the saddest thing in the world to see the poor Celt disappear in America, leaving his own country, leaving his language, and very often his religion."

"And does it no longer seem to you sad that such a thing should happen?"

"No, not if it is the will of God. God has specially chosen the Irish race to convert the world, no race has provided so many missionaries, no race has preached the gospel more frequently to the heathen and once we realize that we have to die, and very soon, and that the Catholic Church is the only true church, our ideas about race and nationality fade from us. They come to seem very trite and foolish. We are here, not to make life successful and triumphant, but to gain heaven. That is the truth, and it is to the honour of the Irish people that they have been selected by God to preach the truth, even though

they lose their nationality in preaching it. I do not expect you to accept these opinions. I know that you think very differently, but living here I have learned to acquiesce in the will of God."

The priest stopped speaking suddenly, like one ashamed of having expressed himself too openly, and soon after we were met by a number of peasants, and the priest's attention was engaged; the inspector of the relief works had to speak to him; and I did not see him again until dinner time.

"You have given them hope," he said.

This was gratifying to hear, and the priest sat listening while I told him of the looms already established in different parts of the country. We talked about half an hour, and then like one who suddenly remembers, the priest got up and fetched his knitting.

"Do you knit every evening?"

"I have got into the way of knitting lately, it passes the time."

"But do you never read?" I asked, and I looked towards the book shelves.

"I used to read a great deal. But there wasn't a woman in the parish that could turn a heel properly, so that I had to learn to knit."

"Do you like knitting better than reading," I asked, feeling ashamed of my curiosity.

"I have constantly to attend sick calls, and if one is absorbed in a book one experiences a certain reluctance in putting it aside."

"The people are very inconsiderate. Now, why did that man put off coming to fetch you till eleven o'clock last night? He knew his wife was ill."

"Sometimes one is apt to think them inconsiderate."

"The two volumes of miracle plays!"

"Yes, and that's another danger, a book puts all kinds of ideas and notions into one's head. The idea of that play-house came out of those books."

"But," I said, "you do not think that God sent the storm because He did not wish a play to be performed."

"One cannot judge God's designs. Whether God sent the storm or whether it was accident must remain a matter for conjecture, but it is not a matter of conjecture that one is doing certain good by devoting oneself to one's daily task, getting the Government to start new relief works, establishing schools for weaving—the people are entirely dependent upon me, and when I'm attending to their wants I know I'm doing right. All the rest is conjecture."

The priest asked for some further information regarding our system of payments, and I answered eagerly. I had begun to feel my curiosity to be disgraceful, and it was unnecessary; my driver would tell me to-morrow why the play-house had been abandoned.

I relied on him to tell me; he was one of those who had the faculty for hearing things; he had heard that I had been up the hill with the priest to see the play-house; he knew all about my walk with the

priest, and was soon telling me that it was the curse of the Widow Sheridan that had brought down the wind that had wrecked the play-house. For it was her daughter that the priest had chosen to play the part of Good Deeds in the miracle play, and the story the driver told me seemed true to the ideas of the primitive people who lived in the waste, and of the waste itself. The girl had been led astray one evening returning from rehearsal—in the words of my car-driver, "She had been 'wake' going home one evening, and when the signs of her 'wakeness' began to show upon her, her mother took the halter off the cow and tied the girl to the wall and kept her there until the child was born. And Mrs. Sheridan put a bit of string round its throat and buried it one night near the playhouse. And it was three nights after that the storm rose and the child was seen pulling the thatch out of the roof."

"But, did she murder the child?"

"Sorra wan of me knows. She sent for the priest when she was dying, and told him what she had done."

"But the priest would not reveal what he heard in the confessional," I said.

"Mrs. Sheridan didn't die that night; not till the end of the week, and the neighbours heard her talking about the child that she buried, and then they all knew what the white thing was that they had seen by the road side. And the night that the priest left her he saw the white thing standing in front of him, and if he hadn't been a priest he would have dropped down

dead. But he knew well enough that it was the unbaptised child, and he took some water from the boghole and dashed it over it, saying, 'I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'"

The driver told his story like one saying his prayers, and he seemed to have forgotten that he had a listener.

"And the ghost hasn't been seen again?" I said.

"No, not that I know of."

"I don't like your story," I said. "I liked the story about Julia Cahill better."

"Well they're both true; one's as true as the other, and Julia and Margaret are in America. Once a woman is wake she must go to America..

"It must have been a great shock to the priest."

"Faith it was, sir, to meet an unbaptised child on the road-side, and that child the only bastard that was ever born in the parish—so Tom Mulhare says, and he's the oldest man in the county."

"It was altogether a very queer idea this playhouse."

"It was indeed, sir, a queer idea, but you see he's a queer man. He has been always thinking of something to do good, and it is said that he thinks too much. Father James is a very queer man, your honour." At the end of a long silence, interrupted now and then by the melancholy cry with which he encouraged his horse, he began another story, how Father James McTurnan had written to the Pope

asking that the priests might marry, "so afeard was he that the Catholics were going to America and the country would become Protestant. And there's James Murdoch's cabin, and he is the man that got the five pounds that the bishop gave Father James to buy a pig, for Mike Mulhare would not give his daughter to James Murdoch until he could show him a pig." And when I asked him how he knew all these things, he said, "There isn't many days in the year that the old grey horse and myself don't do five and twenty miles, and I'm often in and out of Rathowen."

"There is no doubt," I said to myself, "that this car-driver is the legitimate descendant of the ancient bards."

THE WEDDING GOWN.

THE WEDDING GOWN.

IT was said, but with what truth I cannot say, that the Roche property had been owned by the O'Dwyers many years ago, several generations past, sometime in the eighteenth century. Only a faint legend of this ownership remained; only once had young Mr. Roche heard of it, and it was from his mother he had heard it; among the country people it was forgotten. His mother had told him that his great, great grandfather, who had made large sums of money abroad, had increased his property by purchase from the O'Dwyers, who then owned, as well as farmed, the hill side on which the Big House stood. The O'Dwyers themselves had forgotten that they were once much greater people than they now were, but the master never spoke to them without remembering it, for though they only thought of themselves as small farmers, dependents on the squire, everyone of them, boys and girls alike, retained an air of high birth, which at the first glance distinguished them from the other tenants of the estate. Though they were not

aware of it, some sense of their remote origin must have survived in them, and I think that in a still more obscure way some sense of it survived in the country side, for the villagers did not think worse of the O'Dwyers because they kept themselves aloof from the pleasures of the village and its squabbles. The O'Dwyers kept themselves apart from their fellows without any show of pride, without wounding anyone's feelings.

The head of the family was a man of forty, and he was the trusted servant, almost the friend, of the young master, he was his bailiff and his steward, and he lived in a pretty cottage by the edge of the lake. O'Dwyer's aunts, they were old women, of sixty-eight and seventy, lived in the Big House, the elder had been cook, and younger housemaid, and both were now past their work, and they lived full of gratitude to the young master, to whom they thought they owed a great deal. He believed the debt to be all on his side, and when he was away he often thought of them, and when he returned home he went to greet them as he might go to the members of his own family. The family of the O'Dwyer's was long-lived, and Betty and Mary had a sister far older than themselves, Margaret Kirwin, "Granny Kirwin," as she was called, and she lived in the cottage by the lake with her nephew, Alec O'Dwyer. She was over eighty, it was said that she was nearly ninety, but her age was not known exactly. Mary O'Dwyer said that Margaret was nearly twenty years

older than she, but neither Betty nor Mary remembered the exact date of their sister's birth. They did not know much about her, for though she was their sister, she was almost a stranger to them. She had married when she was sixteen, and had gone away to another part of the country, and they had hardly heard of her for thirty years. It was said that she had been a very pretty girl, and that many men had been in love with her, and it was known for certain that she had gone away with the son of the gamekeeper of the grandfather of the present Mr. Roche, so you can understand what a very long while ago it was, and how little of the story of her life had come to the knowledge of those living now.

It was certainly sixty years since she had gone away with this young man; she had lived with him in Meath for some years, nobody knew exactly how many years, maybe some nine or ten years, and then he had died suddenly, and his death, it appears, had taken away from her some part of her reason. It was known for certain that she left Meath after his death, and had remained away many years. She had returned to Meath about twenty years ago, though not to the place she had lived in before. Some said she had experienced misfortunes so great that they had unsettled her mind. She herself had forgotten her story, and one day news had come to Galway—news, but it was sad news, that she was living in some very poor cottage on the edge of Navan town where her strange behaviour and her

strange life had made a scandal of her. The priest had to inquire out her relations, and it took him some time to do this, for the old woman's answers were incoherent, but he at length discovered she came from Galway, and he had written to the O'Dwyers. And immediately on receiving the priest's letter, Alec sent his wife to Navan, and she had come back with the old woman.

"And it was time indeed that I went to fetch her," she said. "The boys in the town used to make game of her, and follow her, and throw things at her, and they nearly lost the poor thing the little reason that was left to her. The rain was coming in through the thatch, there was hardly a dry place in the cabin, and she had nothing to eat but a few scraps that the neighbours gave her. Latterly she had forgotten how to make a fire, and she ate the potatoes the neighbours gave her raw, and on her back there were only a few dirty rags. She had no care for anything except for her wedding gown. She kept that in a box covered over with paper so that no damp should get to it, and she was always folding it and seeing that the moths did not touch it, and she was talking of it when I came in at the door. She thought that I had come to steal it from her. The neighbours told me that that was the way she always was, thinking that someone had come to steal her wedding gown."

This was all the news of Margaret Kirwin that Alec O'Dwyer's wife brought back with her. The old

woman was given a room in the cottage, and though with food and warmth and kind treatment she became a little less bewildered, a little less like a wild, hunted creature, she never got back her memory sufficiently to tell them all that had happened to her after her husband's death. Nor did she seem as if she wanted to try to remember, she was garrulous only of her early days when the parish bells rang for her wedding, and the furze was in bloom. This was before the Big House on the hill had been built. The hill was then a fine pasture for sheep, and Margaret would often describe the tinkling of the sheep-bells in the valley, and the yellow furze, and the bells that were ringing for her wedding. She always spoke of the bells, though no one could understand where the bells came from. It was not customary to ring the parish bell for weddings, and there was no other bell, so that it was impossible to say how Margaret could have got the idea into her head that bells were ringing for her when she crossed the hill on her way to the church, dressed in the beautiful gown, which the grandmother of the present Mr. Roche had dressed her in, for she had always been the favourite, she said, with the old mistress, a much greater favourite than even her two sisters had ever been. Betty and Mary were then little children and hardly remembered the wedding, and could say nothing about the bells.

Margaret Kirwin walked with a short stick, her head lifted hardly higher than the handle and when the family were talking round the kitchen fire she

would come among them for a while and say something to them, and then go away, and they felt they had seen someone from another world. She hobbled now and then as far as the garden gate, and she frightened the peasantry, so strange did she seem among the flowers—so old and forlorn, almost cut off from this world, with only one memory to link her to it. It was the spectral look in her eyes that frightened them, for Margaret was not ugly. In spite of all her wrinkles the form of the face remained, and it was easy, especially when her little grand-niece was by, to see that sixty-five years ago she must have had a long and pleasant face, such as one sees in a fox, and red hair like Molly.

Molly was sixteen, and her grey dress reached only to her ankles. Everyone was fond of the poor old woman; but it was only Molly who had no fear of her at all, and one would often see them standing together beside the pretty paling that separated the steward's garden from the high road. Chestnut trees grew about the house, and china roses over the walls, and in the course of the summer there would be lilies in the garden, and in the autumn hollyhocks and sunflowers. There were a few fruit-trees a little further on, and, lower down, a stream. A little bridge led over the stream into the meadow, and Molly and her grandaunt used to go as far as the bridge, and everyone wondered what the child and the old woman had to say to each other. Molly was never able to give any clear account of what the old woman said to her

during the time they spent by the stream. She had tried once to give Molly an account of one long winter when the lake was frozen from side to side. Then there was something running in her mind about the transport of pillars in front of the Big House—how they had been drawn across the lake by oxen, and how one of the pillars was now lying at the bottom of the lake. That was how Molly took up the story from her, but she understood little of it. Molly's solicitude for the old woman was a subject of admiration, and Molly did not like to take the credit for a kindness and pity which she did not altogether feel. She had never seen anyone dead, and her secret fear was that the old woman might die before she went away to service. Her parents had promised to allow her to go away when she was eighteen, and she lived in the hope that her aunt would live two years longer, and that she would be saved the terror of seeing a dead body. And it was in this intention that she served her aunt, that she carefully minced the old woman's food and insisted on her eating often, and that she darted from her place to fetch the old woman her stick when she rose to go. When Margaret Kirwin was not in the kitchen Molly was always laughing and talking, and her father and mother often thought it was her voice that brought the old woman out of her room. So the day Molly was grieving because she could not go to the dance the old woman remained in her room, and not seeing her at tea-time they began to be afraid, and Molly was asked to go fetch her aunt.

"Something may have happened to her, mother. I daren't go."

And when old Margaret came into the kitchen towards evening she surprised everyone by her question :—

"Why is Molly crying?"

No one else had heard Molly sob, if she had sobbed, but everyone knew the reason of her grief; indeed, she had been reproved for it many times that day.

"I will not hear any more about it," said Mrs. O'Dwyer; "she has been very tiresome all day. Is it my fault if I cannot give her a gown to go to the dance?" And then, forgetting that old Margaret could not understand her, she told her that the servants were having a dance at the Big House, and had asked Molly to come to it. "But what can I do? She has got no gown to go in. Even if I had the money there would not be time to send for one now, nor to make one. And there are a number of English servants stopping at the house; there are people from all parts of the country, they have brought their servants with them, and I am not going to see my girl worse dressed than the others, so she cannot go. She has heard all this, she knows it. . . . I've never seen her so tiresome before." Mrs. O'Dwyer continued to chide her daughter; but her mother's reasons for not allowing her to go to the ball, though unanswerable, did not seem to console Molly, and she sat looking very miserable. "She has been sitting like that all day," said Mrs. O'Dwyer, "and I wish that it were

to-morrow, for she will not be better until it is all over."

"But, mother, I am saying nothing; I will go to bed. I don't know why you are blaming me. I am saying nothing. I can't help feeling miserable."

"No, she don't look a bit cheerful," the old woman said, "and I don't like her to be disappointed." This was the first time that old Margaret had seemed to understand since she came to live with them what was passing about her, and they all looked at her, Mrs. O'Dwyer and Alec and Molly. They stood waiting for her to speak again, wondering if the old woman's speech was an accident, or if she had recovered her mind. "It is a hard thing for a child at her age not to be able to go to the dance at the Big House, now that she has been asked. No wonder Molly is unhappy. I remember the time that I should have been unhappy too, and she is very like me."

"But, Granny, what can I do? She can't go in the clothes she is wearing, and she has only got one other frock, the one she goes to Mass in. I can't allow my daughter——"

But seeing the old woman was about to speak Alec stopped his wife.

"Let us hear what she has to say," he whispered.

"There is my wedding gown: that is surely beautiful enough for anyone to wear. It has not been worn since the day I wore it when the bells were ringing, and I went over the hill and was married;

and I have taken such care of it that it is the same as it was that day. Molly will look very nice in it; she will look as I looked that day."

No one spoke; father, mother, and daughter stood looking at the old woman. Her offer to lend her wedding gown had astonished them as much as her recovery of her senses. Everything she once had, and there were tales that she had once been rich, had melted away from her; nothing but this gown remained. How she had watched over it! Since she had come to live with the O'Dwyers she had hardly allowed them to see it. When she took it out of its box to air it and to strew it with camphor she closed her room door. Only once had they seen it, and then only for a few moments. She had brought it out to show it, as a child brings its toy, but the moment they stretched their hands to touch it she had taken it away, and they had heard her locking the box it was in. But now she was going to lend it to Molly. They did not believe she meant what she was saying. They expected her to turn away and to go to her room, forgetful of what she had said. Even if she were to let Molly put the dress on, she would not let her go out of the house with it. She would change her mind at the last minute.

"When does this dancing begin?" she asked, and when they told her she said there would be just time for her to dress Molly, and she asked the girl and her mother to come into her room. Mrs. O'Dwyer feared the girl would be put to a bitter disappointment, but

if Molly once had the gown on she would not oblige her to take it off.

"In my gown you will be just like what I was when the bells were ringing."

She took the gown out of its box herself, and the petticoat and the stockings and the shoes; there was everything there.

"The old mistress gave me all these. Molly has got the hair I used to have; she will look exactly like myself. Are they not beautiful shoes?" she said. "Look at the buckles. They will fit her very well; her feet are the same size as mine were."

And Molly's feet went into the shoes just as if they had been made for her, and the gown fitted as well as the shoes, and Molly's hair was arranged as nearly as possible according to the old woman's fancy, as she used to wear her hair when it was thick and red like a fox's.

The girl thought that Granny would regret her gift. She expected the old woman would follow her into the kitchen and ask her to take the things off, and that she would not be able to go to the ball after all. She did not feel quite safe until she was a long way from the house, about halfway up the drive. Her mother and father had said that the dance would not be over until maybe six o'clock in the morning, and they offered her the key of the house; but Granny had said that she would sit up for her.

"I will doze a bit upon a chair. If I am tired I will lie down upon my bed. I shall hear Molly; I

shall not sleep much. She will not be able to enter the house without my hearing her."

It was extraordinary to hear her speak like this, and, a little frightened by her sudden sanity, they waited up with her until midnight. Then they tried to persuade her to go to bed, to allow them to lock up the house; but she sat looking into the fire, seeming to see the girl dancing at the ball quite clearly. She seemed so contented that they left her, and for an hour she sat dreaming, seeing Molly young and beautifully dressed in the wedding gown of more than sixty years ago.

Dream after dream went by, the fire had burned low, the sods were falling into white ashes, and the moonlight began to stream into the room. It was the chilliness that had come into the air that awoke her, and she threw several sods of turf on to the fire.

An hour passed, and old Margaret awoke for the last time.

"The bells are ringing, the bells are ringing," she said, and she went to the kitchen door; she opened it, and stood in the garden under the rays of the moon. The night of her marriage was just such a night as this one, and she had stood in the garden amid the summer flowers, just as she did now.

"The day is beginning," she said, mistaking the moonlight for the dawn, and, listening, it seemed to her that she heard once more the sound of bells coming across the hill. "Yes, the bells are ringing," she said; "I can hear them quite clearly, and

I must hurry and get dressed—I must not keep him waiting."

And, returning to the house, she went to her box, where her gown had lain so many years; and though no gown was there it seemed to her that there was one, and one more beautiful than the gown she had cherished. It was the same gown, only grown more beautiful. It had grown into softer silk, into a more delicate colour; it had become more beautiful, and she held the dream-gown in her hands and she sat with it in the moonlight, thinking how fair he would find her in it. Once her hands went to her hair, and then she dropped them again.

"I must begin to dress myself; I must not keep him waiting."

The moonlight lay still upon her knees, but little by little the moon moved up the sky, leaving her in the shadow.

It was at this moment, as the shadows grew denser about old Margaret, that the child who was dancing at the ball came to think of her who had given her her gown, and who was waiting for her. It was in the middle of a reel she was dancing, and she was dancing it with Mr. Roche, that she felt that something had happened to her aunt.

"Mr. Roche," she said, "you must let me go away; I cannot dance any more to-night. I am sure that something has happened to my aunt, the old woman, Margaret Kirwin, who lives with us in the Lodge. It was she who lent me this gown. This was her

wedding gown, and for sixty-five years it has never been out of her possession. She has hardly allowed anyone to see it; but she said that I was like her, and she heard me crying because I had no gown to go to the ball, and so she lent me her wedding gown."

"You look very nice, Molly, in the wedding gown, and this is only a fancy." Seeing the girl was frightened and wanted to go, he said—"But why do you think that anything has happened to your aunt?"

"She is very old."

"But she is not much older than she was when you left her."

"Let me go, Mr. Roche; I think I must go. I feel sure that something has happened to her. I never had such a feeling before, and I could not have that feeling if there was no reason for it."

"Well, if you must go."

She glanced to where the moon was shining and ran down the drive, leaving Mr. Roche looking after her, wondering if after all she might have had a warning of the old woman's death. The night was one of those beautiful nights in May, when the moon soars high in the sky, and all the woods and fields are clothed in the green of spring. But the stillness of the night frightened Molly, and when she stopped to pick up her dress she heard the ducks chattering in the reeds. The world seemed divided into darkness and light. The hawthorn trees threw black shadows that reached into the hollows, and Molly did not dare to go by the path that led through

a little wood, lest she should meet Death there. For now it seemed to her that she was running a race with Death, and that she must get to the cottage before him. She did not dare to take the short cut, but she ran till her breath failed her. She ran on again, but when she went through the wicket she knew that Death had been before her. She knocked twice; receiving no answer she tried the latch, and was surprised to find the door unlocked. There was a little fire among the ashes, and after blowing the sod for some time she managed to light the candle and holding it high she looked about the kitchen.

"Auntie, are you asleep? Have the others gone to bed?"

She approached a few steps, and then a strange curiosity came over her, and though she had always feared death she now looked curiously upon death, and she thought that she saw the likeness which her aunt had often noticed.

"Yes," she said, "she is like me. I shall be like that some day if I live long enough."

And then she knocked at the door of the room where her parents were sleeping.

THE CLERK'S QUEST.

THE CLERK'S QUEST.

FOR thirty years Edward Dempsey had worked low down in the list of clerks in the firm of Quin and Wee. He did his work so well that he seemed born to do it, and it was felt that any change in which Dempsey was concerned would be unlucky. Managers had looked at Dempsey doubtingly and had left him in his habits. New partners had come into the business, but Dempsey showed no sign of interest. He was interested only in his desk. There it was by the dim window, there were his pens, there was his penwiper, there was the ruler, there was the blotting-pad. Dempsey was always the first to arrive and the last to leave. Once in thirty years of service he had accepted a holiday; it had been a topic of conversation all the morning, and the clerks tittered when he came into the bank in the afternoon saying he had been looking into the shop windows all the morning, and had come down to the bank to see how they were getting on.

An obscure, clandestine, taciturn little man occupying in life only the space necessary to bend

over a desk, and whose conical head leaned to one side as if in token of his humility.

It seemed that Dempsey had no other ambition than to be allowed to stagnate at a desk to the end of his life, and this modest ambition would have been realised had it not been for a slight accident—the single accident that had found its way into Dempsey's well-ordered and closely-guarded life. One summer's day, when the heat of the areas was rising and filling the open window, Dempsey's somnolescent senses were moved by a soft and suave perfume. At first he was puzzled to say whence it came; then he perceived that it had come from the bundle of cheques which he held in his hand; and then that the odoriferous paper was a pale pink cheque in the middle of the bundle. He had hardly seen a flower for thirty years, and could not determine whether the odour was that of mignonette, or honeysuckle, or violet. But at that moment the cheques were called for; he handed them to his superior, and with cool hand and clear brain continued to make entries in the ledger until the bank closed.

But that night, just as he was falling asleep, a remembrance of the insinuating perfume returned to him. He wondered whose cheque it was, and regretted not having looked at the signature, and many times during the succeeding weeks he paused as he was making entries in the ledger to think if the haunting perfume were rose, lavender, or mignonette. It was not the scent of rose, he was sure of that.

And a vague swaying of hope began. Dreams that had died or had never been born floated up like things from the depths of the sea, and many old things that he had dreamed about or had never dreamed at all drifted about. Out of the depths of life a hope that he had never known, or that the severe rule of his daily life had checked long ago, began its struggle for life; and when the same sweet odour came again—he knew now it was the scent of heliotrope—his heart was lifted and he was overcome in a sweet possessive trouble. He sought for the cheque amid the bundle of cheques and, finding it, he pressed the paper to his face. The cheque was written in a thin, feminine handwriting, and was signed "Henrietta Brown," and the name and handwriting were pregnant with occult significances in Dempsey's disturbed mind. His hand paused amid the entries, and he grew suddenly aware of some dim, shadowy form, gracile and sweet-smelling as the spring—moist shadow of wandering cloud, emanation of earth, or woman herself? Dempsey pondered, and his absent-mindedness was noticed, and occasioned comment among the clerks.

For the first time in his life he was glad when the office hours were over. He wanted to be alone, he wanted to think, he felt he must abandon himself to the new influence that had so suddenly and unexpectedly entered his life. Henrietta Brown! the name persisted in his mind like a half-forgotten, half-remembered tune; and in his efforts to realize

her beauty he stopped before the photographic displays in the shop windows ; but none of the famous or the infamous celebrities there helped him in the least. He could only realize Henrietta Brown by turning his thoughts from without and seeking the intimate sense of her perfumed cheques. The end of every month brought a cheque from Henrietta Brown, and for a few moments the clerk was transported and lived beyond himself.

An idea had fixed itself in his mind. He knew not if Henrietta Brown was young or old, pretty or ugly, married or single; the perfume and the name were sufficient, and could no longer be separated from the idea, now forcing its way through the fissures in the failing brain of this poor little bachelor clerk—that idea of light and love and grace so inherent in man, but which rigorous circumstance had compelled Dempsey to banish from his life.

Dempsey had had a mother to support for many years, and had found it impossible to economise. But since her death he had laid by about £150 ; he thought of this money with awe, and, awed by his good fortune, he thought how much more he might save before he was forced to leave his employment ; and to have touched a penny of his savings would have seemed to him a sin near to sacrilege. Yet he did not hesitate for a single moment to send Henrietta Brown, whose address he had been able to obtain through the bank books, a diamond brooch which had cost £20. He omitted to say whence it had

come, and for days he lived in a warm wonderment, satisfied in the thought that she was wearing something that he had seen and touched.

His ideal was now by him and always, and its dominion was so complete that he neglected his duties at the bank, and was censured by the amazed manager. The change of his condition was so obvious that it became the subject for gossip, and jokes were now beginning to pass into serious conjecturing. Dempsey took no notice, and his plans matured amid jokes and theories. The desire to write and reveal himself to his beloved had become imperative; and after some very slight hesitation—for he was moved more by instinct than by reason—he wrote a letter urging the fatality of the circumstances that separated them, and explaining rather than excusing this revelation of his identity. His letter was full of deference, but at the same time it left no doubt as to the nature of his attachments and hopes. The answer to this letter was a polite note begging him not to persist in this correspondence, and warning him that if he did it would become necessary to write to the manager of the bank. But the return of his brooch did not dissuade Dempsey from the pursuit of his ideal; and as time went by it became more and more impossible for him to refrain from writing love letters, and sending occasional presents of jewellery. When the letters and the jewellery were returned to him he put them away carelessly, and he bought the first sparkle of diamonds that caught his fancy, and

forwarded ring, bracelet, and ear-ring, with whatever words of rapturous love that came up in his mind.

One day he was called into the manager's room, severely reprimanded, and eventually pardoned in consideration of his long and faithful services. But the reprimands of his employers were of no use, and he continued to write to Henrietta Brown, growing more and more careless of his secret, dropping brooches about the office, and letters. At last the story was whispered from desk to desk. Dempsey's dismissal was the only course open to the firm ; and it was with much regret that the partners told their old servant that his services were no longer required.

To their surprise Dempsey seemed quite unaffected by his dismissal ; he even seemed relieved, and left the bank smiling, thinking of Henrietta, bestowing no thought on his want of means. He did not even think of providing himself with money by the sale of some of the jewellery he had about him, nor of going to his lodging and packing up his clothes, he did not think how he should get to Edinburgh—it was there that she lived. He thought of her even to the exclusion of the simplest means of reaching her, and was content to walk about the streets in happy mood, watching for glimpses of some evanescent phantom at the wood's edge wearing a star on her forehead, or catching sight in the wood's depths of a glistening shoulder and feet flying towards the reeds. Full of happy aspiration he wandered, seeking the country through

the many straggling villages that hang like children round the skirts of Dublin and passing through one of these at night fall, and, feeling tired, he turned into the bar of an inn, and asked for bread and cheese.

"Come a long way, governor?" said one of two rough fellows.

"I am going a long way," replied Dempsey; "I am going north—very far north."

"And what may yer be going north for, if I may make bold to ask?"

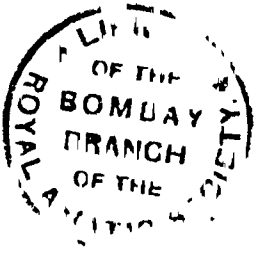
"I am going to the lady I love, and I am taking her beautiful presents of jewellery."

The two rough fellows exchanged glances; and it is easy to imagine how Dempsey was induced to let them have his diamonds, so that inquiries might be made of a friend round the corner regarding their value. After waiting a little while, Dempsey paid for his bread and cheese, and went in search of the thieves. But the face of Henrietta Brown obliterated all remembrance of thieves and diamonds, and he wandered for a few days, sustained by his dream and the crusts that his appearance drew from the pitiful. At last he even neglected to ask for a crust, and, foodless, followed the beckoning vision, from sunrise to sundown.

It was a soft, quiet summer's night when Dempsey lay down to sleep for the last time. He was very tired, he had been wandering all day, and threw himself on the grass by the road side. He lay

there looking up at the stars, thinking of Henrietta, knowing that everything was slipping away, and he passing into a diviner sense. Henrietta seemed to be coming nearer to him and revealing herself more clearly; and when the word of death was in his throat, and his eyes opened for the last time, it seemed to him that one of the stars came down from the sky and laid its bright face upon his shoulder.

ALMS-GIVING.



ALMS-GIVING.

As I searched for a penny it began to rain. The blind man opened a parcel and I saw that it contained a small tarpaulin cape. But the several coats I wore made it difficult to find my change; I thought I had better forego my charity that day, and I walked quickly away.

"Eight or nine hours a day waiting for alms is his earthly lot," I said, and walking towards the river, and leaning on the parapet, I wondered if he recognised the passing steps—if he recognised my steps—and associated them with a penny? Of what use that he should know the different steps? if he knew them there would be anticipation and disappointments. But a dog would make life comprehensible, and I imagined a companionship, a mingling of muteness and blindness, and the joy that would brighten the darkness when the dog leaped eagerly upon the blind man's knees. I imagined the joy of warm feet and limb, and the sudden poke of the muzzle. A dog would be a link to bind the blind

beggar to the friendship of life. Now why has this small blind man, with a face as pale as a plant that never sees the sun, not a dog? A dog is the natural link and the only link that binds the blind beggar to the friendship of life.

Looking round, I could see that he was taking off his little cape, for it had ceased raining. But in a few weeks it would rain every day, and the wind would blow from the river in great gusts. "Will he brave another winter?" I asked myself. "Iron blasts will sweep through the passage; they will find him through the torn shirt and the poor grey trousers, the torn waistcoat, the black jacket, and the thread-bare overcoat—someone's cast-off garment. . . Now he may have been born blind, or he may have become blind; in any case he has been blind for many years, and if he persist in living he will have to brave many winters in that passage, for he is not an old man What instinct compels him to bear his dark life? Is he afraid to kill himself? Does this fear spring from physical or from religious motives? Fear of hell? Surely no other motive would enable him to endure his life."

In my intolerance for all life but my own I thought I could estimate the value of the Great Mockery, and I asked myself angrily why he persisted in living. I asked myself why I helped him to live. It would be better that he should throw himself at once into the river. And this was reason talking to me, and it told me that the most charitable act I could do would be to help him

over the parapet. But behind reason there is instinct, and in obedience to an impulse, which I could not weigh or appreciate, I went to the blind man and put money into his hand; the small coin slipped through his fingers; they were so cold that he could not retain it, and I had to pick it from the ground.

"Thankee, sir. Can you tell, sir, what time it is?"

This little question was my recompense. He and I wanted to know the time of day. I asked him why he wanted to know the time, and he told me because that evening a friend was coming to fetch him. And, wondering who that friend might be, and hoping he might tell me, I asked him about his case of pencils, expressing a hope that he sold them. He answered that he was doing a nice bit of trading.

"The boys about here are a trouble," he said, "but the policeman on the beat is a friend of mine, and he watches them and makes them count the pencils they take. The other day they robbed me, and he gave them such a cuffing that I don't think they'll take my pencils again. You see, sir, I keep the money I take for the pencils in the left pocket, and the money that is given to me I keep in the right pocket. In this way I know if my accounts are right when I make them up in the evening."

Now where, in what lonely room, does he sit making up his accounts? but, not wishing to seem inquisitorial, I turned the conversation.

"I suppose you know some of the passers-by."

"Yes, I know a tidy few. There's one gentleman who gives me a penny every day, but he's gone abroad, I hear, and sixpence a week is a big drop."

As I had given him a penny a day all the summer, I assumed he was speaking of me. And my sixpence a week meant a day's dinner, perhaps two day's dinner! It was only necessary for me to withhold my charity to give him ease. He would hardly be able to live without my charity, and if one of his other patrons were to do likewise the world would be freed from a life that I could not feel to be of any value.

So do we judge the world if we rely on our reason, but instinct clings like a child and begs like a child, and my instinct begged me to succour this poor man, to give him a penny every day, to find out what his condition was, and to stop for a chat every time I gave him my penny. I had obeyed my instinct all the summer, and now reason had intervened, reason was in rebellion, and for a long time I avoided, or seemed to avoid, the passage where the blind man sat for eight or nine hours, glad to receive, but never asking for alms.

I think I forgot the blind man for several months. I only remembered him when I was sitting at home, or when I was at the other side of the town, and sometimes I thought I made myself little excuses not to pass through the passage. Our motives are vague, complex and many, and one is never quite sure why one does a thing, and if I were to say that I did not give the blind man pennies that winter because I believed it

better to deprive him of his means of livelihood and force him out of life than to help him to remain in life and suffer, I should be saying what was certainly untrue, yet the idea was in my mind, and I experienced more than one twinge of conscience when I passed through the passage. I experienced remorse when I hurried past him, too selfish to unbutton my coat, for every time I happened to pass him it was raining or blowing very hard, and every time I hurried away trying to find reasons why he bore his miserable life. I hurried to my business, my head full of chatter about St. Simon's Stylites, telling myself that he saw God far away at the end of the sky, His immortal hands filled with immortal recompenses; reason chattered about the compensation of celestial choirs, but instinct told me that the blind man standing in the stone passage knew of no such miraculous consolations.

As the winter advanced, as the winds grew harsher, my avoidance of the passage grew more marked, and one day I stopped to think, and ask myself why I avoided it.

There was a faint warmth in the sky, and I heard my heart speaking quite distinctly, and it said:—

"Go to the blind man—what matter about your ten minutes' delay; you have been unhappy since you refrained from alms-giving, and the blind beggar can feel the new year beginning."

"You see, sir, I have added some shirt buttons and studs to the pencils. I don't know how they will go, but one never knows till one tries."

Then he told me it was small pox that destroyed his eyes, and he was only eighteen at the time.

"You must have suffered very much when they told you your sight was going?"

"Yes, sir. I had the hump for six weeks."

"What do you mean?"

"It doubled me up, that it did. I sat with my head in my hands for six weeks."

"And after that?"

"I didn't think any more about it—what was the good?"

"Yes, but it must be difficult not to think, sitting here all alone."

"One musn't allow oneself to give way. One would break down altogether if one did. I've some friends, and in the evening I get plenty of exercise."

"What do you do in the evenings?"

"I turn a hay-cutting machine in a stable."

"And you're quite contented?"

"I don't think, sir, a happier man than I passes through this gate-way once a month."

He told me his little boy came to fetch him in the evening.

"You're married?"

"Yes, sir, and I've got four children. They're going away for their holidays next week."

"Where are they going?"

"To the sea. It will do them good; a blow on the beach will do them a power of good."

"And when they come back they will tell you about it?"

"Yes."

"And do you ever go away for a holiday?"

"Last year I went with a policeman. A gentleman who passes this way, one of my friends, paid four shillings for me. We had a nice dinner in a public house for a shilling, and then we went for a walk."

"And this year are you going with the policeman?"

"I hope so, a friend of mine gave me half-a-crown towards it."

"I'll give you the rest."

"Thankee, sir."

A soft south wind was blowing, and an instinct as soft and as gentle filled my heart, and I went towards some trees. The new leaves were beginning in the high branches. I was sitting where sparrows were building their nests, and very soon I seemed to see further into life than I had ever seen before. "We're here," I said, "for the purpose of learning what life is, and the blind beggar has taught me a great deal, something that I could not have learnt out of a book, a deeper truth than any book contains." . . . And then I ceased to think, for thinking is a folly when a soft south wind is blowing and an instinct as soft and as gentle fills the heart.

SO ON HE FARES.

SO ON HE FARES.

HIS mother had forbidden him to stray about the roads, and standing at the garden gate, little Ulick Burke often thought he would like to run down to the canal and watch the boats passing. His father used to take him for walks along the towing path, but his father had gone away to the wars two years ago, and standing by the garden gate he remembered how his father used to stop to talk to the lock-keepers. Their talk turned often upon the canal and its business, and Ulick remembered that the canal ended in the Shannon, and that the barges met ships coming up from the sea.

He was a pretty child with bright blue eyes, soft curls, and a shy winning manner, and he stood at the garden gate thinking how the boats rose up in the locks, how the gate opened and let the boats free, and he wondered if his father had gone away to the war in one of the barges. He felt sure if he were going away to the war he would go in a barge. And he wondered if the barge went as far as the war or only

as far as the Shannon? He would like to ask his mother, but she would say he was troubling her with foolish questions, or she would begin to think again that he wanted to run away from home. He wondered if he were to hide himself in one of the barges whether it would take him to a battlefield where he would meet his father walking about with a gun upon his shoulder?

And leaning against the gate-post, he swung one foot across the other, though he had been told by his mother that he was like one of the village children when he did it. But his mother was always telling him not to do something, and he could not remember everything he must not do. He had been told not to go to the canal lest he should fall in, nor into the field lest he should tear his trousers. He had been told he must not run about in the garden lest he should tread on the flowers, and his mother was always telling him he was not to talk to the school children as they came back from school, though he did not want to talk to them. There was a time when he would have liked to talk to them, now he ran to the other side of the garden when they were coming home from school; but there was no place in the garden where he could hide himself from them, unless he got into the dry ditch. The school children were very naughty children; they climbed up the bank, and, holding on to the paling, they mocked at him; and their mockery was to ask him the way to "Hill Cottage;" for his

mother had had the name painted on the gate, and no one else in the parish had given their cottage a name.

However, he liked the dry ditch, and under the branches, where the wren had built her nest, Ulick was out of his mother's way, and out of the way of the boys; and lying among the dead leaves he could think of the barges floating away, and of his tall father who wore a red coat and let him pull his moustache. He was content to lie in the ditch for hours, thinking he was a bargeman and that he would like to use a sail. His father had told him that the boats had sails on the Shannon—if so it would be easy to sail to the war; and breaking off in the middle of some wonderful war adventure, some tale about his father and his father's soldiers, he would grow interested in the life of the ditch, in the coming and going of the wren, in the chirrup of a bird in the tall larches that grew beyond the paling.

Beyond the paling there was a wood full of moss-grown stones and trees overgrown with ivy, and Ulick thought that if he only dared to get over the paling and face the darkness of the hollow on the other side of the paling, he could run across the meadow and call from the bank to a steersman. The steersman might take him away! But he was afraid his mother might follow him on the next barge, and he dreamed a story of barges drawn by the swiftest horses in Ireland.

But dreams are but a makeshift life. He was very unhappy, and though he knew it was wrong he could not

help laying plans for escape. Sometimes he thought that the best plan would be to set fire to the house; for while his mother was carrying pails of water from the back yard he would run away; but he did not dare to think out his plan of setting fire to the house, lest one of the spirits which dwelt in the hollow beyond the paling should come and drag him down a hole.

One day he forgot to hide himself in the ditch, and the big boy climbed up the bank, and asked him to give him some gooseberries, and though Ulick would have feared to gather gooseberries for himself he did not like to refuse the boy, and he gave him some, hoping that the big boy would not laugh at him again. And they became friends, and very soon he was friends with them all, and they had many talks clustered in the corner, the children holding on to the palings, and Ulick hiding behind the hollyhocks ready to warn them.

"It's all right, she's gone to the village," Ulick said, one day the big boy asked him to come with them, they were going to spear eels in the brook, and he was emboldened to get over the fence, and to follow across the meadow, through the hazels, and very soon it seemed to him that they had wandered to the world's end. At last they came to the brook and the big boy turned up his trousers, and Ulick saw him lifting the stones with his left hand and plunging a fork into the water with his right. When he brought up a struggling eel at the

end of the fork Ulick clapped his hands and laughed, and he had never been so happy in his life before.

After a time there were no more stones to raise, and sitting on the bank they began to tell stories. His companions asked him when his father was coming back from the wars, and he told them how his father used to take him for walks up the canal, and how they used to meet a man who had a tame rat in his pocket. Suddenly the boys and girls started up, crying "Here's the farmer," and they ran wildly across the fields. However, they got to the high road long before the farmer could catch them, and his escape enchanted Ulick. Then the children went their different ways, the big boy staying with Ulick, who thought he must offer him some gooseberries. So they crossed the fence together and crouched under the bushes, and ate the gooseberries till they wearied of them Afterwards they went to look at the bees, and while looking at the insects crawling in and out of their little door, Ulick caught sight of his mother, and she coming towards them. Ulick cried out, but the big boy was caught before he could reach the fence, and Ulick saw that, big as the boy was, he could not save himself from a slapping. He kicked out, and then blubbered, and at last got away. In a moment it would be Ulick's turn, and he feared she would beat him more than she had beaten the boy—for she hated him, whereas she was only vexed with the boy—she would give him bread and water—he had often had a beating and bread and water for a lesser wickedness

than the bringing of one of the village boys into the garden to eat gooseberries.

He put up his right hand and saved his right cheek, and then she tried to slap him on the left, but he put up his left hand, and this went on until she grew so angry that Ulick thought he had better allow her to slap him, for if she did not slap him at once she might kill him.

"Down with your hands, sir, down with your hands, sir," she cried, but before he had time to let her slap him she said—"I will give you enough of bees," and she caught one that had just rested on a flower and put it down his neck. The bee stung him in the neck where the flesh is softest, and he ran away screaming, unable to rid himself of the bee. He broke through the hedges of sweet pea, and he dashed through the poppies, trampling through the flower beds, until he reached the dry ditch.

There is something frightful in feeling a stinging insect in one's back, and Ulick lay in the dry ditch, rolling among the leaves in anguish. He thought he was stung all over, he heard his mother laughing, and she called him a coward through an opening in the bushes, but he knew she could not follow him down the ditch. His neck had already begun to swell, but he forgot the pain of the sting in hatred. He felt he must hate his mother, however wicked it might be to do so. His mother had often slapped him, he had heard of boys being slapped, but no one had ever put a bee down a boy's back

before; he felt he must always hate her, and creeping up through the brambles to where he could get a view of the garden, he waited until he saw her walk up the path into the house; and then, stealing back to the bottom of the ditch, he resolved to get over the paling. A few minutes after he heard her calling him, and then he climbed the paling, and he crossed the dreaded hollow, stumbling over the old stones.

As he crossed the meadow he caught sight of a boat coming through the lock, but the lock-keeper knew him by sight, and would tell the bargeman where he came from, and he would be sent home to his mother. He ran on, trying to get ahead of the boat, creeping through hedges, frightened lest he should not be able to find the canal! Now he stopped, sure that he had lost it; his brain seemed to be giving way, and he ran like a mad child up the bank. Oh, what joy! The canal flowed underneath the bank. The horse had just passed, the barge was coming, and Ulick ran down the bank calling to the bargeman. He plunged into the water, getting through the bulrushes. Half of the barge had passed him, and he held out his hands. The ground gave way and he went under the water; green light took the place of day, and when he struggled to the surface he saw the rudder moving. He went under again, and remembered no more until he opened his eyes and saw the bargeman leaning over him.

"Now, what ails you to be throwing yourself into the water in that way?"

Ulick closed his eyes; he had no strength for answering him, and a little while after he heard someone come on board the barge, and he guessed it must be the man who drove the horse. He lay with his eyes closed, hearing the men talking of what they should do with him. He heard a third voice and guessed it must be a man come up from the cabin. This man said it would be better to take him back to the last lock, and they began to argue about who should carry him. Ulick was terribly frightened, and he was just going to beg of them not to bring him back when he heard one of them say, "It will be easier to leave him at the next lock." Soon after, he felt the boat start again, and when Ulick opened his eyes, he saw hedges gliding past, and he hoped the next lock was a long way off.

"Now," said the steersman, "since you are awaking out of your faint, you'll be telling us where you come from, because we want to send you home again."

"Oh," he said, "from a long way off, the Shannon."

"The Shannon!" said the bargeman. "Why, that is more than seventy miles away. How did you come up here?"

It was a dreadful moment. Ulick knew he must give some good answer or he would find himself in his mother's keeping very soon. But what answer was he to give? it was half accident, half cunning that made him speak of the Shannon. The steersman said again, "The Shannon is seventy miles away, how did you get up here?" and by this time Ulick was

aware that he must make the bargemen believe he had hidden himself on one of the boats coming up from the Shannon, and that he had given the bargeman some money, and then he burst into tears and told them he had been very unhappy at home; and when they asked him why he had been unhappy, he did not answer, but he promised he would not be a naughty boy any more if they would take him back to the Shannon. He would be a good boy and not run away again. His pretty face and speech persuaded the bargemen to bring him back to the Shannon; it was decided to say nothing about him to the lock-keeper, and he was carried down to the cabin. He had often asked his father if he might see the bargeman's cabin; and his father had promised him that the next time they went to the canal he should go on board a barge and see the cabin; but his father had gone away to the wars. Now he was in the bargeman's cabin, and he wondered if they were going to give him supper and if he would be a bargeman himself when he grew up to be a man.

Some miles further the boat bumped the edge of the bridge, and on the other side of the bridge there was the lock, and he heard the lock gate shut behind the boat and the water pour into the lock; the lock seemed a long time filling, and he was frightened lest the lockman might come down to the cabin, for there was no place where he could hide.

After passing through the lock one of the men came down to see him, and he was taken on deck, and

in the calm of the evening Ulick came to look upon the bargemen as his good angels. They gave him some of their supper, and when they arrived at the next lock they made their beds on the deck, the night being so warm. It seemed to Ulick that he had never seen the night before, and he watched the sunset fading streak by streak, and imagined he was the captain of a ship sailing in the Shannon. The stars were so bright that he could not sleep, and it amused him to make up a long story about the bargemen snoring by his side. The story ended with the sunset and then the night was blue all over, and raising himself out of his blanket, he watched the moonlight rippling down the canal. Then the night grew grey. He began to feel very cold, and wrapped himself in his blanket tightly, and the world got so white that Ulick grew afraid, and he was not certain whether it would not be better to escape from the boat and run away while everybody slept.

He lay awake maturing his little plan, seeing the greyness pass away and the sky fill up with pink and fleecy clouds.

One of the men roused, and, without saying a word, went to fetch a horse from the stables, and another went to boil the kettle in the cabin, and Ulick asked if he might help him; and while he blew the fire he heard the water running into the lock, and thought what a fool they were making of the lock-keeper, and when the boat was well on its way towards the next lock the steersman called him

to come up, and they breakfasted together. Ulick would have wished this life to go on for ever, but the following day the steersman said :—

"There is only one lock more between this and our last stopping place. Keep a look-out for your mother's cottage."

He promised he would, and he beguiled them all the evening with pretended discoveries. That cabin was his mother's cabin. No, it was further on, he remembered those willow trees. Ulick's object was to get as far away from his home as possible ; to get as near to the Shannon as he could.

"There's not a mile between us and the Shannon now," said the steersman. "I believe you've been telling us a lot of lies, my young man."

Ulick said his mother lived just outside the town, they would see the house when they passed through the last lock, and he planned to escape that night, and about an hour before the dawn he got up, and, glancing at the sleeping men, he stepped ashore and ran until he felt very tired. And when he could go no further he lay down in the hay in an outhouse.

A woman found him in the hay some hours after, and he told her his story, and as the woman seemed very kind he laid some stress on his mother's cruelty. He mentioned that his mother had put a bee down his neck, and bending down his head he showed her where the bee had stung him. She stroked his pretty curls and looked into his blue

eyes, and she said that anyone who could put a bee down a boy's neck must be a she-devil.

She was a lone widow longing for someone to look after, and in a very short time Ulick was as much loved by his chance mother as he had been hated by his real mother.

Three years afterwards she died, and Ulick had to leave the cottage.

He was now a little over thirteen, and knew the ships and their sailors, and he went away in one of the ships that came up the river, and sailed many times round the coast of Ireland, and up all the harbours of Ireland. He led a wild, rough life, and his flight from home was remembered like a tale heard in infancy, until one day, as he was steering his ship up the Shannon, a desire to see what they were doing at home came over him. The ship dropped anchor, and he went to the canal to watch the boats going home And it was not long before he was asking one of the bargemen if he would take him on board. He knew what the rules were, and he knew they could be broken, and how, and he said if they would take him he would be careful the lockmen did not see him, and the journey began.

The month was July, so the days were as endless and the country was as green and as full of grass, as they were when he had come down the canal, and the horse strained along the path, sticking his toes into it just as he had done ten years ago; and when they came to a dangerous place Ulick saw the

man who was driving the horse take hold of his tail, just as he had seen him do ten years ago.

"I think those are the rushes, only there are no trees, and the bank does not seem so high." And then he said as the bargeman was going to stop his horse, "No, I am wrong. It isn't there."

They went on a few miles further, and the same thing happened again. At last he said, "Now I am sure it is there."

And the bargeman called to the man who was driving the horse and stopped him, and Ulick jumped from the boat to the bank.

"That was a big leap you took," said a small boy who was standing on the bank. "It is well you didn't fall in."

"Why did you say that?" said Ulick, "is your mother telling you not to go down to the canal?"

"Look at the frog! he's going to jump into the water," said the little boy.

He was the same age as Ulick was when Ulick ran away, and he was dressed in the same little trousers and little boots and socks, and he had a little grey cap. Ulick's hair had grown darker now, but it had been as fair and as curly as this little boy's, and he asked him if his mother forbade him to go down to the canal.

"Are you a bargeman? Do you steer the barge or do you drive the horse?"

"I'll tell you about the barge if you'll tell me about your mother. Does she tell you not to come down to the canal?"

The boy turned away his head and nodded it.

"Does she beat you if she catches you here?"

"Oh, no, mother never beats me."

"Is she kind to you?"

"Yes, she's very kind, she lives up there, and there's a garden to our cottage, and the name 'Hill Cottage' is painted up on the gate post."

"Now," said Ulick, "tell me your name."

"My name is Ulick."

"Ulick! And what's your other name?"

"Ulick Burke."

"Ulick Burke!" said the big Ulick. "Well, my name is the same. And I used to live at Hill Cottage too."

The boy did not answer.

"Whom do you live with?"

"I live with mother."

"And what's her name?"

"Well, Burke is her name," said the boy.

"But her front name?"

"Catherine."

"And where's your father?"

"Oh, father's a soldier; he's away."

"But my father was a soldier too, and I used to live in that cottage."

"And where have you been ever since?"

"Oh," he said, "I've been a sailor. I think I will go to the cottage with you."

"Yes," said little Ulick, "come up and see mother, and you'll tell me where you've been sailing," and he put his hand into the seafarer's.

And now the seafarer began to lose his reckoning; the compass no longer pointed north. He had been away for ten years, and coming back he had found his own self, the self that had jumped into the water at this place ten years ago. Why had not the little boy done as he had done, and been pulled into the barge and gone away. If this had happened Ulick would have believed he was dreaming or that he was mad. But the little boy was leading him, yes, he remembered the way, there was the cottage, and its paling, and its hollyhocks. And there was his mother coming out of the house and very little changed.

"Ulick, where have you been? Oh, you naughty boy," and she caught the little boy up and kissed him. And so engrossed was her attention in her little son that she had not noticed the man he had brought home with him.

"Now who is this?" she said.

"Oh, mother, he jumped from the boat to the bank, and he will tell you, mother, that I was not near the bank."

"Yes, mother, he was ten yards from the bank; and now tell me, do you think you ever saw me before." . . . She looked at him.

"Oh, it's you! Why we thought you were drowned."

"I was picked up by a bargeman."

"Well, come into the house and tell us what you've been doing."

"I've been seafaring," he said, taking a chair. "But what about this Ulick?"

"He's your brother, that's all."

His mother asked him of what he was thinking, and Ulick told her how greatly astonished he had been to find a little boy exactly like himself, waiting at the same place.

"And father?"

"Your father is away."

"So," he said, "this little boy is my brother. I should like to see father. When is he coming back?"

"Oh," she said, "he won't be back for another three years. He enlisted again."

"Mother," said Ulick, "you don't seem very glad to see me."

"I shall never forget the evening we spent when you threw yourself into the canal. You were a wicked child."

"And why did you think I was drowned?"

"Well, your cap was picked up in the bulrushes."

He thought that whatever wickedness he had been guilty of might have been forgiven, and he began to feel that if he had known how his mother would receive him he would not have come home.

"Well, the dinner is nearly ready. You'll stay and have some with us, and we can make you up a bed in the kitchen."

He could see that his mother wished to welcome him, but her heart was set against him now as it had always been. Her dislike had survived ten years of absence. He had gone away and had met with a mother who loved him, and had done ten years' hard

seafaring. He had forgotten his real mother—forgotten everything except the bee and the hatred that gathered in her eyes when she put it down his back; and that same ugly look he could now see gathering in her eyes, and it grew deeper every hour he remained in the cottage. His little brother asked him to tell him tales about the sailing ships, and he wanted to go down to the canal with Ulick, but their mother said he was to bide here with her. The day had begun to decline, his brother was crying, and he had to tell him a sea-story to stop his crying. "But mother hates to hear my voice," he said to himself, and he went out into the garden when the story was done. It would be better to go away, and he took one turn round the garden and got over the paling at the end of the dry ditch, at the place he had got over it before, and he walked through the old wood, where the trees were overgrown with ivy, and the stones with moss. In this second experience there was neither terror nor mystery—only bitterness. It seemed to him a pity that he had ever been taken out of the canal, and he thought how easy it would be to throw himself in again, but only children drown themselves because their mothers do not love them; life had taken a hold upon him, and he stood watching the canal, though not waiting for a boat. But when a boat appeared he called to the man who was driving the horse to stop, for it was the same boat that had brought him from the Shannon.

"Well, was it all right?" the steersman said.

"Did you find the house? How were they at home?"

"They're all right at home," he said; "but father is still away. I am going back. Can you take me?"

The evening sky opened calm and benedictive, and the green country flowed on, the boat passed by ruins, castles and churches, and every day was alike until they reached the Shannon.

THE WILD GOOSE.

THE WILD GOOSE.

HE remembered a green undulating country out of which the trees seemed to emerge like vapours, and a line of pearl-coloured mountains showing above the horizon on fine days. And this was all. But this slight colour memory had followed him through all his wanderings. His parents had emigrated to Manchester when he was nine, and when he was sixteen he felt that he must escape from Manchester, from the overwhelming dreariness of the brick chimneys and their smoke cloud. He had joined a travelling circus on its way to the Continent and he crossed with it from New Haven to Dieppe in charge of the lions. The circus crossed in a great storm ; Ned was not able to get about, the tossing of the vessel closed the ventilating slides, and when they arrived at Dieppe the finest lion was dead.

"Well, there are other things to do in life besides feeding lions," he said, and taking up his fiddle he became interested in it. He played it all the way across the Atlantic, and everyone said there was no reason why he should not play in the opera house.

But an interview with the music conductor dispelled illusions. Ned learnt from him that improvisations were not admissible in an opera house; and when the conductor told him what would be required of him he began to lose interest in his musical career. As he stood jingling his pence on the steps of the Opera House a man went by who had crossed with Ned, and the two getting into conversation, Ned was asked if he could draw a map according to scale. It would profit him nothing to say no; he remembered he had drawn maps in the school in Manchester. A bargain was struck! he was to get ten pounds for his map! He ordered a table; he pinned out the paper, and the map was finished in a fortnight. It was of a mining district, and having nothing to do when it was finished he thought he would like to see the mine; the owners encouraged him to go there, and he did some mining in the morning—in the evenings he played his fiddle. Eventually he became a journalist.

He wandered and wrote, and wandered again, until one day, finding himself in New York, he signed an agreement and edited a newspaper. But he soon wearied of expressing the same opinions, and as the newspaper could not change its opinions Ned volunteered to go to Cuba and write about the insurgents. And he wrote articles that inflamed the Americans against the Spaniards, and went over to the American lines to fight when the Americans declared war against Spain, and fought so well that he might

have become a general if the war had lasted. But it was over, and, overpowered by an extraordinary dislike to New York, he felt he must travel. He wanted to see Europe again, and remembering the green plain of Meath, he said :— "I'll go to Ireland."

His father and mother were dead, and without a thought of his relations, he read the legends of Meath on his way out; he often sat considering his adventures: the circus, the mining camp, his sympathy with the Cubans in their revolt against Spain, convinced him of his Gaelic inheritance and that something might be done with Ireland. England's power was great, but Spain's power had been great too, and when Spain thought herself most powerful the worm had begun. Everything has its day, and as England decayed, Ireland would revive. A good time might be on its way to Ireland; if so he would like to be there or thereabouts; for he always liked to be in the van of a good time.

He went straight to Tara, his mind bending rather to pagan than to Christian Ireland. Traces of Cormac's banqueting hall were pointed out to him, and he imagined what this great hall, built entirely of wood and hung about with skins, must have been. He was shown the Rath of Kings and the Rath of Grania. Her name brought to his mind her flight with Diarmuid and how when they had had to cross a stream and her legs were wetted, she had said to Diarmuid, who would not break his oath to

Finn, "Diarmuid, you are a great warrior, but this water is braver than you!" "Perhaps this very stream!" he said, looking towards a stream that flowed from the well of Neamhtach or Pearly. But he was told it was this stream that had turned the first water mill in Ireland, and that Cormac had put up the mill to save a beautiful bond maid from toiling at the quern.

The morning was spent in seeking the old sites, and in the afternoon he went to the inn and found a good number of villagers in the tap room. He learned from them that there were cromlechs and Druid altars within walking distance of Tara, and decided on a walking tour. He wandered through the beautiful country, interested in Ireland's slattern life, touched by the kindness and simplicity of the people. "Poor people," he thought, "how touching it is to find them learning their own language," and he began to think out a series of articles about Ireland.

"They talk of Cuchulain," he said, "but they prefer an Archbishop, and at every turn in their lives they are paying the priest. The title of my book shall be 'A Western Thibet,' an excellent title for my book!" and leaning on a gate, and looking across a hay field he saw the ends of chapters.

Now that he had a book to write, his return to America was postponed; a postponement was to Ned an indefinite period, and he was glad he was not returning to America till the Spring, for he had found pleasant rooms in a farm house. He would make

them his head-quarters; for it was only by living in a farmhouse he could learn the life of the people and its real mind. And he would have written his book just as he had planned it if he had not met Ellen Cronin.

She was the only daughter of a rich farmer in the neighbourhood. He had heard so much about her learning and her pretty face that he was disposed to dispute her good looks; but in spite of his landlady's praise he had liked her pretty oval face. "Her face is pretty when you look at it," he said to his landlady. But this admission did not satisfy her. "Well, enthusiasm is pleasant," he thought, and he listened to her rambling talk.

"She used to like to come to tea here, and after her tea she and my son James, who was the same age, used to make paper boats under the alder trees."

And the picture of Ellen making boats under alder trees pleased Ned's fancy, and he encouraged the landlady to tell him more about her. She told him that Ellen had not taken to study till she was twelve, and that it was the priest who had set her reading books and had taught her Latin.

Ned lay back in his chair smiling, listening to the landlady telling him about Ellen. She had chosen her own school. She had inquired into the matter, and had taken her father into her confidence one day by telling him of the advantages of this school. But this part of the story did not please Ned, and he said he did not like her a bit better for having chosen

her own school. Nor did he like her better because her mistress had written to her father to say she had learned all that she could learn in Ireland. He liked her for her love of Ireland and her opposition to her father's ideas. Old Cronin thought Ireland a miserable country and England the finest in the world, whereas Ellen thought only of Irish things, and she had preferred the Dublin University to Oxford or Cambridge. He was told that her university career had been no less brilliant than her school career, and he raised his eyebrows when the landlady said that Miss Ellen used to have her professors staying at Mount Laurel, and that they used to talk Latin in the garden.

But she was long ago done with the professors, and Ned asked the landlady to tell him what change had come over the mind of this somewhat pedantic young woman. And he was told that Ellen had abandoned her studies and professors for politics and politicians, and that these were a great trial to her father, into whose house no Nationalist member of Parliament had ever put his foot before. "Now the very men that Mr. Cronin used to speak of as men who were throwing stones at the police three years ago are dining with him to-day," and worse than her political opinions, according to Mr. Cronin, was her resolution to speak the language of her own country. "When he had heard her talking it to a boy she had up from the country to teach her, Mr. Cronin stuck both his hands into his stubbly hair and rushed out of the house like a wild man."

It was pleasant to listen to the landlady's babble about the Cronins, for he was going to spend the evening with them ; he had been introduced to her father, a tall, thin, taciturn man, who had somewhat gruffly, but not unkindly, asked him to come to spend the evening with them, saying that some friends were coming in, and there would be some music.

Ned's life had been lived in newspaper offices, in theatres, circuses and camps. He knew very little of society—nothing at all of European society—and was curious to see what an Irish country house was like. The Cronins lived in a dim, red brick, eighteenth century house. It stood in the middle of a large park, and the park was surrounded by old grey walls and Ned liked to lean on these walls, for in places they had crumbled, and admire the bracken in the hollows and the wind-blown hawthorn trees growing on the other side of the long winding drive. He had long wished to walk in the park and now he was there. The hawthorns were in bloom and the cuckoo was calling. The sky was dark over head, but there was light above the trees, and long herds of cattle wandered and life seemed to Ned extraordinarily lovely and desirable at that moment. "I wonder what she is like, living in this beautiful place, walking among these mysterious hollows and these abundant hawthorn groves?"

The young lady had been pointed out to him as she went by, and he was impatient to be introduced to Ellen, but she was talking to some friends near the

window, and she did not see him. He liked her white dress, there were pearls round her neck, and her red hair was pinned up with a tortoiseshell comb. She and her friends were looking over a photograph album, and Ned was left with Mr. Cronin to talk to him as best he could; for it was difficult to talk to this hard, grizzled man, knowing nothing about the war in Cuba nor evincing any interest in America. When Ned asked him about Ireland he answered in short sentences, which brought the conversation to abrupt closes. America and Ireland having failed to draw him out, Ned began to talk of his landlady. But it was not until he related the conversation he had had with her that evening about Miss Cronin that the old farmer began to talk a little. Ned could see he was proud of his daughter; he regretted that she had not gone to Oxford, and said she would have carried all before her if she had gone there. Ned could see that what his landlady had told him was true—that old Cronin thought very little of Ireland. He hoped to get three minutes' conversation, at least, out of Girton, but the old farmer seemed to have said everything he had to say on the subject. The conversation failed again, and Ned was forced to speak to him of the interest that Miss Cronin took in the Irish language and her desire to speak it. At the mention of the Irish language, the old man grew gruffer, and remembering that the landlady had said that Miss Cronin was very religious, Ned spoke of the priests—there were

two in the room—and he asked Mr. Cronin which of them had encouraged Miss Cronin to learn Irish. He had never heard the language spoken, and would like to hear it.

"I believe Mr. Cronin, it was Father Egan who taught your daughter Latin?"

"It was so," said Mr. Cronin; "but he might have left the Irish alone, and politics, too. We keep them as fat as little bonhams, and they ought to be satisfied with that."

Ned did not know what were little bonhams, and pretended a great interest when he was told that bonham was the Irish for sucking pig, and glancing at the priests he noticed they were fat indeed, and he said, "There is nothing like faith for fattening. It is better than any oil cake."

Mr. Cronin gave a grunt and Ned thought he was going to laugh at this sally, but he suddenly moved away and Ned wondered what had happened. It was Ellen who had crossed the room to speak to her father, and Ned could see that she had heard his remark, and he could see that the remark had angered her, that she thought it in bad taste. He prepared quickly a winning speech which would turn the edge of her indignation, but before he had time to speak the expression of her face changed and a look of pleasure passed into it; he could see that the girl liked him, and he hastened to tell her that his landlady had told him about the paper boats and the alder trees. And Ellen began to speak about the landlady, saying

she was a very good kind woman, and she wanted to know if Ned were comfortable at the farm house. But she seemed to have some difficulty in speaking, and then, as if moved by some outside influence, they walked across the room towards the window and sat under the shadow of the red damask curtains. A gentle breeze was blowing and the curtains filled with it and sank back with a mysterious rustle. And beyond them the garden lay dark and huddled in the shadows of great trees. He heard her say she was sorry that James, the landlady's son, had gone to America, and then they spoke of the forty thousand that were leaving Ireland every year. It was Ned who continued the conversation, but he could see that what he said hardly entered her ear at all. Yet she heard his voice in her heart, and he, too, heard her voice in his heart, and several times she felt she could not go on talking, and once she nearly lost consciousness and must have swayed a little, for he put out his hand to save her.

They went into the garden and walked in the dusk. He told her about the war in Cuba and about the impulse which had brought him back to Ireland, and his tale seemed to her the most momentous thing she had ever heard. She listened to his first impressions about Tara, and every moment it seemed to her that she was about to hear a great secret, a secret that had been troubling her a long while; every moment she expected to hear him speak it, and she almost cried when her father came to ask Ned if he would play for them.

Ellen was not a musician, and another woman would have to accompany him. How tall and thin he was and what manly hands! She could hardly look at his hands without shuddering, so beautiful were they when they played the violin; and that night music said something more to her than it had ever said before. She heard again the sounds of birds and insects, and she saw again the gloom of the trees, and she felt again and more intensely the overpowering ecstasy, and she yielded herself utterly and without knowing why. When he finished playing he came to her and sat by her, and everything she said fell from her lips involuntarily. She seemed to have lost herself utterly, she seemed to have become fluid, she yielded herself like a fluid; it was like dying: for she seemed to pass out of herself to become absorbed in the night. How the time passed she knew not, and when her guests came to bid her good-bye she hardly saw them, and listened to their leave-taking with a little odd smile on her lips, and when everyone was gone she bade her father good-night absent-mindedly, fearing, however, that he would speak to her about Ned. But he only said good-night, and she went up the wide staircase conscious that the summer night was within the house and without it; that it lay upon the world, a burden sweet and still, like happiness upon the heart.

She opened her window, and sat there hoping that something would come out of the night and whisper in her ear the secret that tormented her.

The stars knew! If she could only read them! She felt she was feeling a little more than she was capable of understanding. The ecstasy grew deeper, and she waited for the revelation. But none came, and feeling a little ashamed she got up to close the window, and it was then that the revelation broke upon her. She had met the man who was to lead the Irish people! They wanted a new leader, a leader with a new idea; the new leader must come from the outside, and he had come to them from America, and her emotion was so great that she would have liked to have awakened her father. She would have liked to have gone into the country waking the people up in the cottages, telling them that the leader had come. She stood entranced, remembering all he had said to her. He had told her he had been moved to return to Ireland after the war in Cuba, and she had not understood. The word married passed through her mind before she could stay it. But she was necessary to this man, of this she was sure; the Voice had told her. She was feeling more than she could understand, and she lay down in her bed certain that she had accomplished the first stage of her journey.

Just then Ned was leaning on the garden gate. The summer night was sweet and still, and he wanted to think of this girl who had come so suddenly into his life. The idea of marriage flitted across his mind as it had flitted across hers, and he tried to remember the exact moment in Cuba when the wish to

see Ireland had come into his mind. To believe in fate and predestination is an easy way out of life's labyrinth, and if one does not believe in something of the kind the figures will not come right. How did he know that he had not met this girl for some unknown purpose. He could see a great white star through a vista in the trees, and he said : "I believe that that star knows. Why will it not tell me?"

And then he walked into the woods, and out under the moon, between the little grey fields. Some sheep had come out on the road and were lying upon it. "I suppose it's all very natural," he said ; "the circus aspiring to the academy and the academy spying the circus. Now, what am I going to do to-morrow? I suppose I must go to see her."

He had visited all the ruins and pondered by all the cromlechs, and was a little weary of historic remains ; the girl was too much in his mind to permit of his doing much writing. He might go to Dublin, where he had business, and in the morning he looked out the trains, but none seemed to suit his convenience, and at 5 o'clock he was at Laurel Hill listening to Ellen. She was anxious to talk to him about the political opportunity he could seize if he were so minded.

"Men have always believed in fate," Ned said, and, interrupting him suddenly, she asked him if he would come to see a pretty house in the neighbourhood—a house that would suit him perfectly, for he must have a house if he intended to go in for politics.

They came back in the dusk, talking of painting and papering and the laying out of the garden. Ellen was anxious that the garden should be nice, and he had been much interested in the old family furniture at Laurel Hill, not in the spindle-legged Sheraton sideboard, but in the big Victorian furniture which the Cronins thought ugly. He liked especially the black mahogany sideboards in the diningroom, and he was enthusiastic about the four-post bed that Mr. Cronin had slept in for thirty years without ever thinking it was a beautiful thing. This massive furniture represented a life that Ned perceived for the first time, a sedate monotonous life; and he could see these people accomplishing the same tasks from daylight to dark; he admired the well-defined circle of their interests and the calm security with which they spoke of the same things every evening, deepening the tradition of their country and their own characters; and he conceived a sudden passion for tradition, and felt he would like to settle down in these grass lands in an eighteenth century house, living always amid heavy mahogany furniture, sleeping every night in a mahogany four-post bed: and he could not help thinking that if he did not get the mahogany four-post bed with the carved top perhaps he would not care to marry Ellen at all.

The next time he saw her their talk turned upon the house she had found for him, and she said if he did not take it he would certainly go back to America in the spring. She forgot herself a little;

her father had to check her, and Ned returned home sure in his mind that she would marry him—if he asked her. And the next day he chose a pair of trousers that he thought becoming—they were cut wide in the leg and narrow over the instep. He looked out for a cravat that she had not seen him wear, and he chose the largest, and he put on his braided coat. He could see that his moustache was not in keeping with his clothes: he had often intended to shave it, but to-day was not the day for shaving. She had liked his moustache, and he thought it would be a pity she should not enjoy it, however reprehensible her taste for it might be. And he pondered his side whiskers, remembering they were in keeping with his costume (larger whiskers would be still more in keeping), and amused by his own fantastic notions, he thought he was beginning to look like the gentleman of seventy or eighty years ago that he had seen in varnished maplewood frames in the drawingroom at the Cronins'. His trousers were of a later period, but they were, nevertheless, contemporaneous with the period of the mahogany sideboard, and that was what he liked best.

Suddenly he stopped, remembering that he had never wished to be married, because he never thought that he could love the same woman always, and now he asked himself if Ellen were an exception, and if he had been led back to Ireland to marry her. He had grown tired of women before, but it seemed to him that he never could grow tired of her. That

remained to be seen, the one certain thing was that he was going to propose to her.

He was told she was in the garden, and he was glad to dispense with the servant's assistance; he would find his way there himself, and, after some searching, he found the wicket. The thing itself and its name pleased him. When he had a garden he would have a wicket. He had already begun to associate Ellen with her garden. She was never so much herself as when attending her flowers, and to please her he had affected an interest in them, but when he had said that the flowers were beautiful his eyes went to the garden walls and Ellen had seen that they interested him more than the flowers. He had said that the buttresses were of no use; they had been built because in those days people took a pleasure in making life seem permanent. The buttresses had enabled him to admire the roses planted between them, and he had grown enthusiastic; but she had laughed at his enthusiasm, seeing quite clearly that he admired the flowers because they enhanced the beauty of the walls.

At the end of the garden there was a view of the Dublin mountains, and the long walk that divided the garden had been designed in order to draw attention to them. The contrast between the wild mountain and the homely primness of the garden appealed to his sense of the picturesque; and even now though the fate of his life was to be decided in a few minutes

he could not but stay to admire the mysterious crests and hollows. In this faint day the mountains seemed more like living things, more mysterious and moving, than he had ever seen them before, and he would have stood looking at them for a long while if he had not had to find Ellen. She was at the furthest end of the garden, where he had never been, beyond the rosery, beyond the grass plot, and she was walking up and down. She seemed to have a fishing net in her hand. But how could she be fishing in her garden? Ned did not know that there was a stream at the end of it; for the place had once belonged to monks, and they knew how to look after their bodily welfare and had turned the place into a trout preserve. But when Mr. Cronin had bought the property the garden was waste and the stream overgrown with willow weed and meadow-sweet and every kind of brier. And it was Ellen who had discovered that the bottom of the stream was flagged and she had five feet of mud taken out of it, and now the stream was as bright and clear as in the time of the monks, and as full of trout. She had just caught two which lay on the grass panting, their speckled bellies heaving painfully,

"There is a great big trout here," Ellen said, "he must be a pound weight, and we tried to catch him all last season but he is very cunning, he dives and gets under the net."

"I think we shall be able to catch him," said Ned, "if he is in the stream and if I could get another net."

"The gardener will give you one."

And presently Ned came back with a net, and they beat up the stream from different ends, Ellen taking the side next the wall. There was a path there nearly free from briers, and she held her light summer dress round her tightly. Ned thought he had never seen anyone so prettily dressed. She wore a striped muslin variegated with pink flowers; there were black bows in her hat and black ribbon was run round the bottom of her dress; she looked very pretty against the old wall touched here and there with ivy. And the grace of her movement enchanted Ned when she leaned forward and prevented the trout from escaping up the stream. But Ned's side of the stream was overgrown with briers and he could not make his way through them. Once he very nearly slipped into the stream, and only saved himself by catching some prickly briers and Ellen had to come over to take the thorns out of his hand. Then they resumed their fishing, hunting the trout up and down the stream But the trout had been hunted so often that he knew how to escape the nets, and dived at the right moment. At last wearied out he let Ned drive him against the bank. Ellen feared he would jump out of the net at the last moment, but he was tired and they landed him safely.

And proud of having caught him they sat down beside him on the grass and Ellen said that the gardener and the gardener's boy had tried to catch him many times; that whenever they had company

to dinner her father said it was a pity they had not the big trout on the table.

The fishing had been great fun, principally on account of Ellen's figure, which Ned admired greatly, and now he admired her profile—its gravity appealed to him—and her attitude full of meditation. He watched her touching the gasping trout with the point of her parasol. She had drawn one leg under her. Her eyes were small and grey and gem-like, and there was a sweet look of interrogation in them now and then.

"I like it, this lustreless day," said Ned, "and those swallows pursuing their food up and down the boding sky. It all seems like a fairy tale, this catching of the fish, you and I. The day so dim," he said, "so quiet and low, and the garden hushed. These things would be nothing to me were it not for you," and he put his hand upon her knee.

She withdrew her knee quickly and a moment after got up, and Ned got up and followed her across the grass plot and through the rosery; not a word was said, and she began to wonder he did not plead to be forgiven. She felt she should send him away, but she could not find words to tell him to go. His conduct was so unprecedented; no one had ever taken such a liberty before. It was shameful that she was not more angry, for she knew she was only trying to feel angry.

"But," he said, suddenly, as if he divined her thoughts, "we've forgotten the fish; won't you come back and help me to carry them. I cannot carry three trout by myself."

She was about to answer severely but as she stood looking at him her thoughts yielded before an extraordinary feeling of delight; she tried in vain to collect her scattered mind—she wished to reproach him.

"Are you going to answer me, Ellen," and he took her hand.

"Ned, are you a Catholic?" she said, turning suddenly.

"I was born one, but I have thought little about religion. I have had other things to think about. What does it matter? Religion doesn't help us to love one another."

"I should like you better if you were a good Catholic."

"I wonder how that is?" he said, and he admired the round hand and its pretty articulations, and she closed her hand on his with a delicious movement.

"I could like you better, Ned, if you were a Catholic. . . I think I could."

"What has my being a good Catholic got to do with your love of me?"

And he watched the small and somewhat severe profile looking across the old grey wall into the flat grey sky.

"I did not say I loved you," she said, almost angrily; "but, if I did love you," she said, looking at him tenderly, "and you were religious, I should be loving something eternal. You don't understand what I mean? What I am saying to you must seem like nonsense."

"No, it doesn't, Ellen, only I am content with the reality. I can love you without wings."

He watched for the look of annoyance in her face that he knew his words would provoke, but her face was turned away.

"I like you, but I am afraid of you. It is a very strange feeling. You ran away with a circus and you let the lion die and you went to fight in Cuba. You have loved other women, and I have never loved anyone. I never cared for a man until I saw you, until I looked up from the album."

"I understand very well, Ellen; I knew something was going to happen to me in Ireland."

She turned; he was glad to see her full face again. Her eyes were fixed upon him, but she saw through him, and jealous of her thought he drew her towards him.

"Let us go into the arbour," he said. "I have never been into the arbour of clipped limes with you."

"Why do you want to go into the arbour?"

"I want to kiss you. . . The gardener can see us now; a moment ago he was behind the Jerusalem artichokes."

"I hadn't noticed the gardener; I hadn't thought about him."

She had persuaded herself before she went into the arbour, and coming out of the arbour she said :—

"I don't think father will raise any objection."

"But you will speak to him. Hello! we're forgetting the fish, and it was the fish that brought all this about.

Was it to bring this about that they lived or to be eaten to-night at dinner?"

"Ned, you take a strange pleasure in making life seem wicked."

"I'm sorry I've been so unsuccessful, but will you ask your father to invite me, Ellen? and I'll try and make life seem nice—and the trout will try, too."

Ellen did not know whether she liked or disliked Ned's levity, but when she looked at him an overpowering emotion clouded her comprehension and she walked in silence, thinking of when he would kiss her again. At the end of the walk she stopped to bind up a carnation that had fallen from its stake.

"Father will be wondering what has become of us."

"I think," said Ned, and his own cowardice amused him, "I think you had better tell your father yourself. You will tell him much better than I."

"And what will you do?" she said, turning suddenly and looking at him with fervid eyes. "Will you wait here for me?"

"No, I will go home and do you come and fetch me—and don't forget to tell him I caught the trout and have earned an invitation to dinner."

His irresponsibility enchanted her in spite of herself—Ned had judged the situation rightly when he said: "It is the circus aspiring to the academy and the academy spying the circus." His epigram occurred to him as he walked home and it amused him, and he thought of how unexpected their lives would be, and he hummed beautiful music as he went

along the roads, Schumann's *Lotus Flower* and *The Moonlight.* Then he recalled the beautiful duet, Siegmund's and Sieglinde's *May Time*, and turning from sublimity suddenly into triviality he chanted the somewhat common but expressive duet in Mireille, and the superficiality of its emotion pleased him at the moment and he hummed it until he arrived at the farm house.

Mrs. Grattan could tell his coming from afar, for no one in the country whistled so beautifully as Mr. Carmady, she said, "every note is clear and distinct; and it does not matter how many there are in the tune he will not let one escape him and there is always a pleasant look in his face when you open the door to him;" and she ran to the door.

"Mrs. Grattan, won't you get me a cup of tea?" And then he felt he must talk to some one. "You needn't bring it upstairs, I will take it in the kitchen if you'll let me."

Mrs. Grattan had a beautiful kitchen. It had an old dresser with a carved top and a grandfather's clock, and Ned liked to sit on the table and watch the stove. She poured him out a cup of tea and he drank it, swinging his legs all the time.

"Well, Mrs. Grattan, I'll tell you some news—I think I am going to marry Miss Cronin."

"Well," said she, "it doesn't astonish me," but she nearly let the teapot drop. "From the first day you came here I always thought something was going to happen to you."

He had no sooner told her the news than he began to regret he had told her, and he said that Miss Cronin had gone to her father to ask his consent. Of course, if he did not give it, there would be no marriage.

"But he will give it. Miss Ellen does exactly as she likes with him, and it's a fine fortune you will be having with her."

"It isn't of that I am thinking," said Ned, "but of her red hair."

"And you wouldn't believe me when I said that she was the prettiest girl in the country. Now you will see for yourself."

Ned hadn't finished his tea when there was a knock at the door.

"And how do you do, Miss Ellen?" said Mrs. Grattan, and Ellen guessed from her manner that Ned had told her.

"Well, Mrs. Grattan, I am glad that you are the first person to bear the news to. I have just asked my father's consent and he has given it. I am going to marry Mr. Carmady."

Mrs. Grattan was sorry there was no cake on the table, but there was some buttered toast in the oven; and Ellen reminded her of the paper boats and the alder trees, and they spoke for a long time about her son James and about people that Ned knew nothing of, until Ned began to feel bored and went to the window. Every now and again he heard a word referring to their marriage, and when the women had done their talk, Ellen said:—

"Father says you are to come back to dinner."

"Mrs. Grattan," said Ned, "we caught three trout this afternoon," and Ellen wondered why Ned should linger to explain how they had caught the big trout.

As they walked down the road Ellen said: "As our love began in a love of Ireland, we might go for a tour round Ireland and see the places that Ireland loves best."

She was eager for a change of scene, and as soon as the wedding was over they began their wanderings. The first place they visited was Tara, and, standing on the Mound of the Hostages, Ellen pointed out the Rath of Grania. All over Ireland there are cromlechs, and the people point to those as the places where the lovers had rested in their flight. Grania became one of Ned's heroines, and he spoke so much of her that Ellen grew a little jealous. They talked of her under the ruins of Dun Angus and under the arches of Cormac's Chapel, the last and most beautiful piece of Irish architecture.

"We were getting on very well," Ned said, "until the English came. This was the last thing we did and after this no more."

On another occasion he ascribed the failure of the Irish in art and literature to the fact that they had always loved the next world, and that the beautiful world under their feet had been neglected or given over to priests. "I hope, Ned," said she, "that you will soon be at the head of affairs."

He took her hand and they wandered on amid the ruins, saying that as soon as their honeymoon was over they would be furnishing a pretty house at the foot of the Dublin mountains.

Her father had offered to make her an allowance, but she preferred a lump sum, and this lump sum of many thousands of pounds had been invested in foreign securities, for Ellen wished that Ned should be free to advocate whatever policy he judged best for Ireland.

"My dear, shall we buy this table?"

And while the price and the marquetry were discussed she remembered suddenly that a most experienced electioneering agent was coming to dinner.

"I wish you hadn't asked him," said Ned; "I looked forward to spending the evening with you," and he watched happiness flash into her eyes.

"There are plenty of evenings before us, and I hope you won't be tired of spending them with me." He said he never wished for better company, and they strolled on through the show rooms.

Turning from some tapestried curtains, he told her he was weary of the life of the camp. One night in Cuba they had crossed a mountain by a bridle path. At the top of the mountain they had come to a ledge of rock three feet high and had to leap their horses one by one up this ledge, and the enemy might have attacked them at any moment. And this incident was typical of what his life had been for the last few years. It had been a skein of adventure, and now his wife was his adventure.

Flowers stood in pretty vases on his table in the summer time and around the room were his books, and on the table his pens and paper. The dining room was always a little surprise, so profusely was the table covered with silver. There were beautiful dinner and dessert services to look at; the servants were well trained, they moved about the table quickly—in a word his home was full of grace and beauty. Lately he had been a great deal from home and had come to look on Ellen as a delicious recompense for the fatigue of a week's electioneering in the West. The little train journey from Dublin was an extraordinary excitement, the passing of the stations one by one, the discovery of his wife on the platform, and walking home through the bright evening, telling how his speech had been received.

Ellen always took Ned round the garden before they went into dinner, and after dinner he went to the piano; he loved his music as she loved her garden. She would listen to him for a while, pleased to find that she liked music. But she would steal away to her garden in a little while and he would go on playing for a long while before he would notice her absence; then he would follow her.

"There were no late frosts this year and I have never seen so many caterpillars!" she said one evening when he joined her; "See they have eaten this flower nearly all away."

"How bright the moon is, we can find them by the light of the moon."

Ellen passed behind the hollyhocks and threw the snails to Ned, not liking to tread upon them herself; she was intent on freeing her flowers from gnawing insects and Ned tried to feel interested, but he liked the moonlight on the hills far better than the flowers. He could not remember which was Honesty and which was Rockit, though the difference had been pointed out to him many times. He liked Larkspur and Canterbury bells, may be it was their names that he liked, for he sometimes mistook one for the other just as Ellen mistook one sonata for another, yet she always liked the same sonatas.

"In another month the poppies will be over everything," she said, "and my pansies are beautiful—see these beautiful yellow pansies! But you're not looking at my garden."

They went towards their apple tree, and Ellen said it was the largest she had ever seen; its boughs were thickest over the seat, and shot straight out, making as it were a little roof. The moon was brilliant among the boughs that night, and they left their seat and passed out of the garden by the wicket, moved by a desire to see the long fields with the woods sloping down to the shore.

And they stood on the hill-side, thinking that they had never seen the sea so beautiful before. On the other side was the dim hill, and the moon led them up the hill-side, up the little path by a ruined church and over a stream that was difficult to cross, for the stepping-stones were placed crookedly. Ellen took Ned's hand

and a little further on there were ash trees and not a wind in the boughs.

"How grey the moonlight is on the mountain," Ned said. They went through the furze where the cattle were lying, and the breath of the cattle was odorous in the night like the breath of the earth itself, and Ned said that the cattle were part of the earth. They sat on a druid stone and wondered at the chance that brought them together, and wondered how they could have lived if chance had not brought them together.

Now, the stone they were sitting upon was a druid stone, and it was from Ellen's lips that Ned heard how Brian had conquered the Danes, and how a century later a traitor had brought the English over; and she told the story of Ireland's betrayal with such fervour that Ned felt she was the support his character required, the support he had been looking for all his life; her self-restraint and her gravity were the supports his character required, and these being thrown into the scale life stood at equipoise. The women who had preceded Ellen were strange, fantastic women, counterparts of himself, but he had always aspired to a grave and well-mannered woman who was never ridiculous.

She protested, saying that she wished Ned to express his own ideas. He pleaded that he was learning Ireland from her lips and that his own ideas about Ireland were superficial and false. Every day he was catching up new ideas and every day he was

shedding them. He must wait until he had re-knit himself firmly to the tradition, and in talking to her he felt that she was the tradition and was sure that he could do no better than accept her promptings, at least for the present.

"We shall always think the same. Do you not feel that?" and when they returned to the house he fetched a piece of paper and pencil and begged of her to dictate, and then begged of her to write what she would like him to say. He said that the sight of her handwriting helped him, and he thought his life would crumble to pieces if she were taken from him.

He told her that she had said he would be a success. He was a success! Success had begun to revolve about him, and he had begun to feel that he was the centre of things: Everyone listened when he spoke; his opinion was sought out, and he could see the people looking towards him for guidance. It pleased Ellen that he should confide in her and his confidence seemed complete. We do not tell all because we do not know all and Ned was only half aware of the little dissatisfaction dormant in his heart. He knew that he had given himself as hostage—half of himself was in his wife's keeping—and he sometimes wondered if he would break out of her custody in spite of his vows.

He had told her that though he was no friend of the church, he was not its active enemy, and he believed he was speaking the truth. The fight for free will would have to be fought in Ireland some day, and this fight

was the most vital; but he agreed with her that other fights would have to be fought and won before the great fight could be arranged for. The order of the present day was for lesser battles, and he promised again and again he would not raise the religious question, and every time he promised his wife his life seemed to vanish. The lesser battles were necessary, but it was the fight for free will that interested him. A politician is the man who does the day's work; he must not forget that; and he was a politician. So he agreed to go to America to speechify and to get money for the lesser battles. He was the man who could get the money—what better man could they send than an Irish-American? An American soldier and a journalist! These were the words that were on everyone's lips, but after speaking them everyone paused, for, notwithstanding Ellen's care, Ned was suspected; the priests had begun to suspect him, but there were no grounds for opposing him.

He was despondent, but Ellen was enthusiastic. Her knowledge of Irish politics enabled her to see that his chance had come.

"If you succeed in America, you'll come back the first man in Ireland."

"Even so," said Ned, "it would be more natural for you to be sorry that I am going."

"I cannot be sorry and glad at the same time."

"You will be lonely."

"Very likely; but, Ned, I shall not be looking very well for the next two months."

"You mean on account of the baby. The next few months will be a trying time for you and I should be with you."

They continued to walk round and round their apple tree and Ellen did not answer for a long while.

"I want you to go to America, I don't care that you should see me losing my figure."

"We have spent many pleasant hours under this apple tree."

"Yes, it has been a dear tree," she said.

"And in about six years there will be one who will appreciate this tree as we have never appreciated it. I can see the little chap running after the apples."

"But, Ned, it may be a girl."

"Then it will be like you, dear."

She said she would send a telegram and Ned shook the boughs, and their apple-gathering seemed portentous. The sound of apples falling in the dusk garden, and a new life coming into the world!

"Men have gathered apples and led their fruitful wives towards the house since the beginning of time." He said these words as he looked over the waste of water seeing Ireland melting away.

A new life was about to begin and he was glad of that. "For the next three months I shall be carried along on the tide of human affairs. In a week I shall be dining in a restaurant." He turned and entered into conversation with some people who interested him, and the day passed in conversation. "It is a curious change," he said, three weeks

later, as he walked home from a restaurant; and he enjoyed the change so much that he wondered if his love for his wife would be the same when he returned. "Yes, that will be another change." He was carried like a piece of wreckage from hotel to hotel. "How different this life is from the life in Ireland," he said one night as he dressed to go to a meeting, and he began to wonder. And he had not been thinking five minutes when a knock came to the door, and he was handed a telegram containing two words: "A boy." He had always felt it was going to be a boy. "Though it does cost a shilling a word they might have let me know how she is," he thought. He lay back in his chair thinking of his wife—indulging in sensations of her beauty, seeing her gem-like eyes, her pretty oval face, and her red hair scattered about the pillow. At first he was not certain whether the baby was lying by the side of the mother, but now he saw it, and he thrilled with a sense of wonder. The commonest of all occurrences never ceases to be the most wonderful, and there lay his wife and child in the room he knew so well—the curtains with a fruit pattern upon them, the pale wall-paper with roses climbing up a trellis, and pretty blue ribbons intervening between each line of roses. The room was painted white, and he knew the odour of the room well, and the sensation of the carpet. He could see the twilight, and the bulky nurse passing to and fro; and his thoughts went back to his child, and

he began to wonder if it were like him or like its mother. It was probably like both. His eyes went to the clock, and he thought of the meeting he was going to. The notes of his speech were upon the table, but he found great difficulty in rousing himself out of his chair; it was so pleasant to lie there, thinking of his wife, of his home, and of his child. But into this vague wandering sensation of happy and beautiful things there came a sudden vision and a thought, He saw his wife take the baby and put it to her breast and he could not bear to think that that beautiful breast, so dear to him, should suffer harm. He had often thought of Ellen as a beautiful marble—she was as full of exquisite lines as any marble—and only very rarely had he thought of her as a mother; the thought had never been entertained long, for it was never wholly sympathetic.

Now his thoughts quickened, and it seemed urgent that he must communicate at once with his wife. She must not suckle the baby! Only by telegram could he reach her soon enough, but it was not possible to telegraph such a thing. He must write, but the letter would take six days to reach her, and he stood thinking. The post was going out: if he wrote at once she would get his letter in a week. He was due at the meeting in about twenty minutes; the notes of his speech lay on the table, and he gathered them up and put them in his pocket, and drawing a sheet of paper towards him, he began a hurried letter. But as soon as he dipped his pen in

the ink, he experienced great difficulty in expressing his feelings; they were intense enough, but they were vague, and he must find reasons. He must tell her that he loved her beauty, and that it must suffer no disfigurement from a baby's lips. No sooner did he put his feelings into words than they shocked him, and he knew how much more they would shock Ellen, and he wondered how he could think such things about his own child. The truth was, there was little time for thinking, and he had to tell Ellen what she must do. It so happened that he had heard only the other day that goat's milk was the exact equivalent to human, but it was often difficult to procure. "You will find no difficulty," he said, "at the foot of the Dublin mountains in procuring goat's milk." His thoughts rushed on, and he remembered the peasant women. One could easily be found who would put her baby on goat's milk and come and nurse his child for a few shillings—ten or fifteen shillings a week; Ellen's beauty was worth a great deal more. The hands of the clock went on, he had to close his letter and post it; and no sooner was it posted than he was beset by qualms of conscience. During the meeting he wondered what Ellen would think of his letter, and he feared it would shock her and trouble her; for, while considering the rights of the child, she would remember his admiration of her.

He passed the following days uneasily, and when the seventh day came he had no difficulty in imagining Ellen reading his letter, and the scene he imagined

was very like what really happened. His letter troubled Ellen greatly. She had been thinking only of her baby, she had been suckling it for several days, and it had given her pleasure to suckle it. She had not thought of herself at all, and Ned's order that she should pass her child on to another, and consider her personal charm for him, troubled her even to tears; and when she told the nurse her husband's wishes the nurse was sorry that Mrs. Carmady had been troubled, for she was still very weak. Now the child was crying. Ellen put it to her little cup-like breast, which was, nevertheless, full of milk, and it was for the nurse to tell her that a foster-mother could easily be found in the village, but this did not console her and she cried very bitterly. The doctor called. And did not think there was anything strange in Ned's letter. He approved of it! He said that Ellen was delicate and had nursed her baby long enough, and it appeared that he had been thinking of recommending a nurse to her, and he spoke of a peasant woman he had just seen. He spoke with so much assurance that Ellen was soothed, but he had not left her very long before she felt that medical opinion would not satisfy her, that she must have theological opinion as well, and she wrote a letter to Father Brennan asking him to come down to see her, mentioning that she had had a baby and could not go to see him. It would be a great relief to her to see him for a few minutes, and if he would come at once she would consider it a great favour. If it were

possible for him to come down that very afternoon she would be deeply grateful. She wished to consult him, and on a matter on which she felt very deeply, and nothing, she said, but a priest's advice could allay her scruples.

The nurse gave her a sheet of paper and a pencil, and she scribbled a letter as best she could in her bed, and lay back fatigued. The nurse said she must not fret, that Father Brennan would be sure to come to her at once if he were at home, and Ellen knew that that was so; she felt that she was peevish, but she felt that Ned ought not to have written her that letter.

The hours that afternoon were very long and she restless and weary of them, and she asked the nurse many times to go to the window to see if Father Brennan were coming. At last he came, and she told him of the letter she had received, not wishing to show him the letter, for it was somewhat extravagant, and she did not like a priest to read Ned's praise of her body. She was anxious, however, to give him a true account of the letter, and would have talked a long while if the priest had not stopped her, saying the matter was one for the doctor to decide. The church had never expressed any views on the subject: whether a mother was justified in nursing her child or in passing it over to a foster-mother. It was entirely a question for the doctor, and if the doctor advised such a course she would be wrong not to follow it. Ellen felt that she had been misunderstood, and she tried to tell the priest that Ned's letter had been inspired by his

admiration of her, and that this seemed to her selfish. She wondered how a father could consider his wife before the child, but when she said this she did not feel she was speaking quite sincerely, and this troubled her; she was on the verge of tears, and the nurse came in and said she had spoken enough that afternoon, and the priest bade her good-bye. The doctor came in soon after; there was some whispering, and Ellen knew that the woman he had brought with him was the foster-mother, and the baby was taken from her, and she saw it fix its gluttonous little lips on the foster-mother's breast.

Now that the priest had ordered her conscience, she got well rapidly, and it was a pleasure to her to prepare herself for her husband's admiration. The nurse thought he would perceive no difference in her, but when they put on her stays it was quite clear that she had grown stouter, and she cried out, "I'm quite a little mother!" But the nurse said her figure would come back all right. Ned's return had been delayed, and this she regarded as fortunate, for there was no doubt that in a month she would be able to meet him, slight and graceful as she had ever been.

As soon as she was able she went for long walks on the hills and every day she improved in health and in figure; and when she read Ned's letter saying he would be in Cork in a few days she felt certain he would see no change in her. She opened her dress and could discern no difference; perhaps a slight wave in the breast's line; she was not quite sure

and she hoped Ned would not notice it. And she chose a white dress. Ned liked her in white, and she tied it with a blue sash; she put on a white hat trimmed with china roses, and the last look convinced her that she had never looked prettier.

"I never wore so becoming a hat," she said. She walked slowly so as not to be out of breath, and, swinging her white parasol over the tops of her tan boots, she stood at the end of the platform waiting for the train to come up.

"I had expected to see you pale," he said, "and perhaps a little stouter, but you are the same, the very same." And saying that he would be able to talk to her better if he were free from his bag, he gave it to a boy to carry. And they strolled down the warm dusty road.

They lived about a mile and a half from the station, and there were great trees and old crumbling walls, and, beyond the walls, water meadows, and it was pleasant to look over the walls and watch the cattle grazing peacefully. And to-day the fields were so pleasant that Ned and Ellen could hardly speak from the pleasure of looking at them.

"You've seen nothing more beautiful in America, have you, Ned?"

There was so much to say it was difficult to know where to begin, and it was delicious to be stopped by the scent of the honeysuckle. Ned gathered some blossoms to put into his wife's dress, but while admiring her dress and her hat and her

pretty red hair he remembered the letter he had written to her in answer to her telegram.

"I've had many qualms about the letter I wrote you in answer to your telegram. After all a child's right upon the mother is the first right of all. I wrote the letter in a hurry, and hardly knew what I was saying."

"We got an excellent nurse, Ned, and the boy is doing very well."

"So you said in your letters. But after posting my letter I said to myself: if it causes me trouble, how much more will it cause her?"

"Your letter did trouble me, Ned. I was feeling very weak that morning and the baby was crying for me, for I had been nursing him for a week. I did not know what to do. I was torn both ways, so I sent up a note to Father Brennan asking him to come to see me, and he came down and told me that I was quite free to give my baby to a foster mother."

"But what does Father Brennan know about it more than anyone of us?"

"The sanction of the Church, Ned ——"

"The sanction of the Church! What childish nonsense is this?" he said. "The authority of a priest. So it was not for me, but because a priest ——"

"But, Ned, there must be a code of morality, and these men devote their lives to thinking out one for us."

He could see that she was looking more charming than she had ever looked before, but her beauty could

not crush the anger out of him ; and she never seemed further from him, not even when the Atlantic divided them.

"Those men devote their lives to thinking out a code of morality for us ! You submit your soul to their keeping. And what remains of you when you have given over your soul ?"

"But, Ned, why this outbreak ? You knew I was a Catholic when you married me."

"Yes, . . . of course, and I'm sorry, Ellen, for losing my temper. But it is only in Ireland that women submit themselves body and soul. It is extraordinary ; it is beyond human reason."

They walked on in silence, and Ned tried to forget that his wife was a Catholic. Her religion did not prevent her from wearing a white dress and a hat with roses in it.

"Shall I go up stairs to see the baby, or will you bring him down ?"

"I'll bring him down."

And it was a great lump of white flesh with blue eyes and a little red down on its head that she carried in her arms.

"And now, Ned, forget the priest and admire your boy."

"He seems a beautiful boy, so healthy and sleepy."

"I took him out of his bed but he never cries. Nurse said she never heard of a baby that did not cry. Do you know I'm sometimes tempted to pinch him to see if he can cry."

She sat absorbed looking at the baby; and she was so beautiful and so intensely real at that moment that Ned began to forget that she had given the child out to nurse because the priest had told her that she might do so without sin.

"I called him after you, Ned. It was Father Stafford who baptised him."

"So he has been baptised!"

"He was not three days old when he was baptised."

"Of course. He could not have gone to heaven if he had not been baptised."

"Ned, I don't think it kind of you to say these things to me. You never used to say them."

"I am sorry, Ellen; I'll say no more, and I'm glad it was Father Stafford who baptised him. He is the most sensible priest we have. If all the clergy were like him I should find it easier to believe."

"But religion has nothing to do with the clergy. It is quite possible to think the clergy foolish and yet to believe that the religion is the true one."

"I like the clergy far better than their religion, and believe them to be worthy of a better one. I like Father Stafford, and you like having a priest to dinner. Let us ask him."

"I'm afraid, Ned, that Father Stafford is getting old. He rarely leaves the house now, and Father Maguire does all the work of the parish."

She liked clerical gossip, and she told him that the church was finished, and how Biddy heard the saints singing in the window made a fine tale.

"So now we have a local saint."

"Yes, and miracles!"

"But do you believe in miracles?"

"I don't know. I shouldn't like to say. One is not obliged to believe in them."

"I'm sure you would enjoy believing in Biddy."

"Oh, Ned, how aggressive you are, and the very day you come back."

But why hadn't she asked him about America and about his speeches? He had looked forward to telling her about them. She seemed to care nothing about them; even when she spoke about them after dinner, he could see that she was not as much interested in politics as she used to be. However, she wore a white dress and black stockings; her red hair was charmingly pinned up with a tortoiseshell comb, and taking her upon his knee he thought it would be well to please himself with her as she was and forget what she was not.

Next morning when he picked up the newspaper and the daily instalment of a cardinal's tour through Ireland caught his eye, he remembered that Ellen had sent for a theologian. . . His eyes went down the columns of the newspaper and he said, "All the old flummery. Ireland's fidelity to her religion, etc., her devotion to Rome, etc.,—to everything," he said, "except herself. Propagations of the faith, exhortations to do as our ancestors had done, to do everything except make life joyous and triumphant." Looking across the page his eye was caught by the

headline, "Profession of Irish Nuns in France." Further on in large letters, "Killmessan Cathedral: Bazaar." And these items of news were followed by a letter from a Bishop. "What a lot of Bishops!" he said. He read of "worthy" parish priests, and a little further on of "brilliant" young clergymen, and at every meeting the chair was taken by the "worthy" or by the "good" parish priest.

"Well," he said, "if the newspaper reflects the mind of the people there is no hope."

And he heard daily of new churches and new convents and the aquisition of property by the clergy. He heard tales of esuriency and avarice, and the persecution of the dancing girl and the piper.

"The clergy," he said, "are swallowing up the country," and he looked for some means whereby he might save the Gael.

About this time an out-cry was made against the ugliness of modern ecclesiastical architecture, and a number of enthusiasts were writing to the newspapers proposing a revival of Irish romanesque; they instanced Cormac's Chapel as the model that should be followed. Ned joined in the outcry that no more stained glass should be imported from Birmingham, and wrote to the newspapers many times that good sculpture and good painting and good glass were more likely to produce a religious fervour than bad. His purpose was to point a finger of scorn at the churches, and he hoped to plead a little later that there were too many churches, and that no more should be

built until the population had begun to increase again. He looked forward to the time when he would be able to say right out that the Gael had spent enough of money on his soul, and should spend what remained to him on his body. He looked forward to the time when he should tell the Gael that his soul was his greatest expense, but the time was far off when he could speak plainly.

The clergy were prepared to admit that German glass was not necessary for their successful mediation, but they were stubborn when Ned asked them to agree that no more churches were necessary. They were not moved by the argument that the population was declining and would not admit that there were too many churches or even that there were churches enough. The ecclesiastical mind is a subtle one and it knows that when men cease to build churches they cease to be religious. The instinct of the clergy was against Ned, but they had to make concessions, for the country was awakening to its danger, and Ned began to think that all its remaining energies were being concentrated in an effort of escape.

Long years ago in America he had watched a small snake trying to swallow a frog. The snake sucked down the frog, and the frog seemed to acquiesce until the half of his body was down the snake's gullet, and then the frog bestirred himself and succeeded in escaping. The snake rested awhile and the next day he renewed his attack. At last the day came when the weary frog delayed too long and Ned watched him disappear down the snake's gullet.

A good deal of Ireland was down the clerical throat and all would go down if Ireland did not bestir herself. Ireland was weakening daily, and every part of her that disappeared made it more difficult for her to extricate herself. Ned remembered that life and death, sickness and health, success and failure are merely questions of balance. A nation is successful when its forces are at balance, and nations rise and fall because the centre of gravity shifts. A single Spaniard is as good as a single German, but the centre of gravity is in Spain no longer.

Ned did not look upon religion as an evil; he knew religion to be necessary; but it seemed to him that the balance had been tilted in Ireland.

He threw himself more and more into the education of the people, and politics became his chief interest. At last he had begun to live for his idea, and long absence from home and long drives on outside cars and evenings spent in inn parlours were accepted without murmuring; these discomforts were no longer perceived, whereas when he and Ellen used to sit over the fire composing speeches together, the thought of them filled him with despair. He used to complain that Ellen was always sending him away from home and to hard mutton shops and dirty bed rooms. He reminded her no more of these discomforts. He came back and spent a day or two with her, and went away again. She had begun to notice that he did not seem sorry to leave, but she did not reproach him, because he said he was working for

Ireland. He tried to think the explanation a sufficient one. Did he not love his home? His home was a delightful relaxation. The moment he crossed the threshold his ideas went behind him and in the hour before dinner he played with his child and talked to Ellen about the house and the garden and the things he thought she was most interested in. After dinner she read or sewed and he spent an hour at the piano, and then he took her on his knees.

And sometimes in the morning as he walked, with Ellen at his side to catch the train, he wondered at his good fortune—the road was so pleasant, so wide and smooth and shaded, in fact just as he imagined the road should be, and Ellen was the very pleasantest companion a man could wish for. He looked on her, on his child and his house at the foot of the Dublin mountains, as a little work of art which he had planned out and the perfection of which entitled him to some credit. He compared himself to one who visits a larder, who has a little snack of something and then puts down the cover, saying, "Now that's all right, that's safe for another week."

Nevertheless he could see a little shadow gathering. His speeches were growing more explicit, and sooner or later his wife would begin to notice that he was attacking the clergy. Had she no suspicion? She was by nature so self-restrained that it was impossible to tell. He knew she read his speeches, and if she read them she must have noticed their anti-clerical tone. Last Saturday he had spoken to her about

politics, but she had allowed the conversation to drop, and that had puzzled him. He was not well reported. The most important parts of his speech were omitted and for these omissions he looked upon the reporters and the editors as his best friends. He had managed to steer his way very adroitly up to the present, but the day of reckoning could not much longer be postponed, and one day coming home from a great meeting he remembered that he had said more than he intended to say, though he had intended to say a good deal. This time the reporter could not save him, and when his wife would read the newspaper to-morrow an explanation could hardly be avoided.

He had thrown a book on the seat opposite, and he put it into his bag. Its Nihilism had frightened him at first but he had returned to the book again and again and every time the attraction had become stronger. The train passed the signal box, and Ned was thinking of the aphorisms—the new Gospel was written in aphorisms varying from three to twenty lines in length—and he thought of these as meat lozenges each containing enough nutriment to make a gallon of weak soup suitable for invalids, and of himself as a sort of illicit dispensary.

Ellen was not on the platform; something had delayed her, and he could see the road winding under trees, and presently he saw her white summer dress and her parasol aslant. There was no prettier, no more agreeable woman than Ellen in Ireland, and

he thought it a great pity to have to worry her and himself with explanations about politics and about religion. To know how to sacrifice the moment is wisdom, and it would be better to sacrifice their walk than that she should read unprepared what he had said. But the evening would be lost! It would be lost in any case, for his thoughts would be running all the while on the morning paper.

And they walked on together, he a little more silent than usual, for he was thinking how he could introduce the subject on which he had decided to speak to her, and Ellen more talkative, for she was telling how the child had delayed her, and it was not until they reached the prettiest part of the road that she noticed that Ned was answering perfunctorily.

"What is the matter, dear? I hope you are not disappointed with the meeting?"

"No, the meeting was well enough. There were a great number of people present and my speech was well received."

"I am glad of that," she said, "but what is the matter, Ned?"

"Nothing. I was thinking about my speech. I hope it will not be misunderstood. People are so stupid, and some will understand it as an attack on the clergy, whereas it is nothing of the kind."

"Well," she said, "if it isn't it will be different from your other speeches."

"How is that?"

"All your speeches lately have been an attack upon

the clergy direct or indirect. I daresay many did not understand them but anyone who knows your opinions can read between the lines."

"If you had read between the lines, Ellen, you would have seen that I have been trying to save the clergy from themselves. They are so convinced of their own importance that they forget that after all there must be a laity."

Ellen answered very quietly, and there was a sadness in her gravity which Ned had some difficulty in appreciating. He went on talking, telling her that some prelate had pointed out lately, and with approbation, that although the population had declined the clergy had been increasing steadily year after year.

"I am really," he said, "trying to save them from themselves. I am only pleading for the harmless and the necessary laity."

Ellen did not answer him for a long while.

"You see, Ned, I am hardly more to you now than any other woman. You come here occasionally to spend a day or two with me. Our married life has dwindled down to that. You play with the baby and you play with the piano, and you write your letters. I don't know what you are writing in them. You never speak to me of your ideas now. I know nothing of your politics."

"I haven't spoken about politics much lately, Ellen, because I thought you had lost interest in them."

"I have lost interest in nothing that concerns you. I have not spoken to you about politics because I know

quite well that my ideas don't interest you any longer. You're absorbed in your own ideas, and we're divided. You sleep now in the spare room, so that you may have time to prepare your speeches."

"But I sometimes come to see you in your room, Ellen."

"Sometimes," she said, sadly, "but that is not my idea of marriage, nor is it the custom of the country, nor is it what the Church wishes."

"I think Ellen you are very unreasonable, and you are generally so reasonable."

"Well, don't let us argue any more," she said. "We shall never agree, I'm afraid."

Ned remembered that he once used to say to her, "Ellen, we are agreed in everything."

"If I had only known that it was going to turn out so disagreeable as this," Ned said to himself, "I should have held my tongue," and he was sorry for having displeased Ellen, so pretty did she look in her white dress and her hat trimmed with china roses; and though he did not care much for flowers he liked to see Ellen among her flowers; he liked to sit with her under the shady apple tree, and the hollyhocks were making a fine show up in the air.

"I think I like hollyhocks better than any flowers, and the sunflowers are coming out," he said.

He hesitated whether he should speak about the swallows, Ellen did not care for birds. The swallows rushed round the garden in groups of six and seven filling the air with piercing shrieks. He had never

seen them so restless. He and Ellen walked across the sward to their seat and then Ellen asked him if he would like to see the child.

"I've kept him out of bed and thought you might like to see him."

"Yes," he said, "go fetch the baby and I will shake the boughs, and it will amuse him to run after the apples."

"Differences of opinion arise," he said to himself, "for the mind changes and desire wanes, but the heart is always the same, and what an extraordinary bond the child is," he said, seeing Ellen leading the child across the sward. He forgot Ireland, forgot priests and forgot politics, forgot everything. He lifted his little son in his arms and shook the boughs and saw the child run after the falling apples, stumbling and falling but never hurting himself.

The quarrels of the day died down; the evening grew more beautiful under the boughs, and this intimate life round their apple tree was strangely intense, and it grew more and more intense as the light died. Every now and then the child came to show them an apple he had picked up, and Ned said: "He thinks he has found the largest apples that have ever been seen." The secret of their lives seemed to approach and at every moment they expected to hear it. The tired child came to his mother and asked to be taken on her lap. An apple fell with a thud, the stars came out, and Ned carried his son, now half asleep, into the house, and they undressed him together, having forgotten, seemingly, their differences of opinion.

But after dinner when they were alone in the drawing room their relations grew strained again. Ned wanted to explain to Ellen that his movement was not anti-clerical, but he could see she did not wish to hear. He watched her take up her work and wondered what he could say to persuade her, and after a little while he began to think of certain pieces of music. But to go to the piano would be like a hostile act. The truth was that he had looked forward to the evening he was going to spend with her, he had imagined an ideal evening with her and could not reconcile himself to the loss. "The hour we passed in the garden was extraordinarily intense," he said to himself, and he regretted ever having talked to her about anything except simple things. "It is unwise of a man to make a comrade of his wife. . . Now I wonder if she would be angry with me if I went to the piano—if I were to play something very gently? Perhaps a book would seem less aggressive." He went into his study and fetched his book, and very soon forgot Ellen. But she had not forgotten him, and she raised her eyes to look at him from time to time, knowing quite well that he was reading the book out of which he drew the greater part of his doctrine that he had alluded to on his way home, and that he had called the Gospel of Life.

He turned the pages, and seeing that his love of her had been absorbed by the book, she stuck her needle in her work, folded it up, and put it into the work basket.

"I am going to bed, Ned." He looked up, and she saw he had returned from a world that was unknown to her, a world in which she had no part, and did not want to have a part, knowing it to be wicked. "You have been reading all the evening. You prefer your book to me. Good-night."

She had never spoken to him so rudely before. He wondered awhile and went to the piano. She had gone out of the room very rudely. Now he was free to do what he liked, and what he liked most was to play Bach. The sound of the piano would reach her bedroom! Well, if it did—he had not played Bach for four weeks and he wanted to play Bach. Yes, he was playing Bach to please himself. He knew the piano would annoy her. And he was right.

She had just lighted the candles on her dressing table, and she paused and listened. It annoyed her that he should go to the piano the moment she left him, and that he should play dry intellectual Bach, for he knew that Bach did not interest her. She was tempted to ring for her maid, and would have sent down word to Ned that she would be obliged if he would stop playing, had it not seemed undignified to do so.

As she undressed she lost control over herself, and lying in bed it seemed to her that Ned had hidden himself in a veil of kindness and good humour, and that the man she had married was a man without moral qualities, a man who would leave her without resentment, without disgust, who would say good-bye

to her as to some brief habit. She could hear Bach's interminable twiddles, and this exasperated her nerves and she wept through many preludes and fugues. Later on she must have heard the fugues in a dream, for the door opened; it passed over the carpet softly; and she heard Ned saying that he hoped the piano had not kept her awake. She heard him lay the candle on the table and come over to her bedside, and, leaning over her, he begged of her to turn round and speak to him.

"My poor little woman, I hope I have not been cross with you this evening."

She turned away petulantly, but he took her hand and held it and whispered to her, and gradually tempted her out of her anger, and taking some of her red hair from the pillow he kissed it. She still kept her head turned from him, but she could not keep back her happiness; it followed her like fire, enfolding her, and at last, raising herself up in the bed, she said:—

"Oh, Ned, do you still love me?"

When he came into her bed she slipped down so that she could lie upon his breast, and they fell asleep thinking of the early train he would have to catch in the morning.

He was going to Dublin, and the servant knocked at the door at seven o'clock; Ellen roused a little asking if he must go to Dublin. She would like him to stay with her. But he could not stay, and she felt she must give him his breakfast. While tying her petticoats she went to the door of Ned's

dressing-room asking him questions, for she liked to talk to him while he was shaving. After breakfast they walked to the station together, and she stood on the platform smiling and waving farewells.

She turned home, her thoughts chattering like the sunshine among the trees; she leaned over the low, crumbling walls and looked across the water meadows. Two women were spending the morning under the trees; they were sewing. A man was lying at length talking to them. This group was part of external nature. The bewitching sunlight found a way into her heart, and it seemed to her that she would never be happy again.

Ned had told her that he was not going to say anything about the priests at this meeting. Ah, if she were only sure he would not attack religion she would not mind him criticising the priests. They were not above criticism; they courted criticism, approving of a certain amount of lay criticism. But it was not the priests that Ned hated, it was religion; and his hatred of religion had increased since he began to read those books—she had seen him put one into his bag, and the rest of the set were in his study. When she got home she paused a moment, and, without knowing exactly why, she turned aside and did not go into his study.

But next day the clock in the drawingroom stopped and, wanting to know the time, she went into the study and looked at the clock, trying to keep her eyes from the book case. But in spite of herself she

looked. The books were there: they had been thrust so far back that she could not read the name of the writer. Well, it did not matter, she did not care to know the name of the writer—Ned's room interested her more than the books. There was his table covered with his papers; and the thought passed through her mind that he might be writing the book he had promised her not to write. What he was writing was certainly for the printer—he was writing only on one side of the paper—and one of these days what he was writing would be printed.

The study was on the ground floor, its windows overlooking the garden, and she glanced to see if the gardener were by, but her wish to avoid observation reminded her that she was doing a dishonourable action, and, standing with the papers in her hand, she hoped she would go out of the study without reading them. She began to read.

The papers in her hand were his notes for the book he was writing, and the title caught her eye, "A Western Thibet." "So he is writing the book he promised me not to write," she said. But she could feel no anger, so conscious was she of her own shame. And she did not forget her shame until she remembered that it was her money that was supporting the agitation. He had been spending a great deal of money lately—they were rich now; her father had died soon after their marriage and all his money had come to her, and Ned was spending it on an anti-religious agitation. She had let Ned

do what he liked; she had not cared what happened so long as she kept his love, and her moral responsibility became clearer and clearer. She must tell Ned that she could give him no more money unless he promised he would not say anything against the priests. He would make no such promise, and to speak about her money would exhibit her in a mean light, and she would lose all her influence. Now that they were reconciled she might win him back to religion; she had been thinking of this all yesterday. How could she tell him that she would take all her money away from him? Ned was the last person in the world who would be influenced by a threat.

And looking round the room she asked herself why she had ever come into it to commit a dishonourable act! and much trouble had come upon her. But two thousand a year of her money was being spent in robbing the people of Ireland of their religion! Maybe thousands of souls would be lost—and through her fault.

Ellen feared money as much as her father had loved it.

"Good Heavens," she murmured to herself, "what am I to do?" Confession. . . . Father Brennan. She must consult him. The temptation to confide her secret became more decisive. Confession! She could ask the priest what she liked in confession, and without betraying Ned. And it was not ten o'clock yet. She would be in time for eleven o'clock Mass, Father Brennan would be hearing confessions after

Mass, and she could get to Dublin on her bicycle in an hour. In three quarters of an hour she was at the presbytery, and before the attendant could answer she caught sight of Father Brennan running down stairs.

"I only want to speak to you for a few minutes."

"I am just going into church."

"Can't I say a word to you before you go in."

And seeing how greatly agitated she was, he took her into the parlour, and she told him that though she trusted him implicitly she could not consult him on this particular question except in the confessional.

"I shall be hearing confessions after Mass."

If the priest told her she must withdraw her money from Ned, her marriage was a broken one. It was she who had brought Ned into politics; she had often spoken of her money in order to induce him to go into politics, and now it was her money that was forcing her to betray him. She had not thought of confession in her present difficulty as a betrayal, but it was one, and a needless one; Father Brennan could only tell her to withdraw her money; yet she must consult the priest—nothing else would satisfy her. She lacked courage: his advice would give her courage. But when she had told Ned that she could give him no more money, she would have to tell him she was acting on the priest's advice, for she could not go on living with him and not tell him everything. A secret would poison her life, and she had no difficulty in imagining how she would remember

it; she could see it stopping her suddenly as she crossed the room when she was thinking of something quite different. The hardest confession of all would be to tell Ned that she had consulted the priest, and she did not think he would ever love her again. But what matter, so long as she was not weak and contemptible in the eyes of God. That is what she had to think of. The love of one's husband is of this world and temporary, but the love of God is for all eternity. All things are in the will of God. It was God that had sent her into Ned's room. She had been compelled, and now she was compelled again. It was God that had sent her to the priest; she was a mere puppet in the hands of God, and she prayed that she might be reconciled to His will, only daring to implore His mercy with one "Our Father" and one "Hail Mary." Further imploration would be out of place, she must not insist too much. God was all wisdom, and would know if the love of her husband might be spared to her, and she hoped she would be reconciled to His will even if her child should be taken from her.

There were two penitents before her. One a woman, faded by time and deformed by work. From the black dress, come down to her through a succession of owners and now as nondescript as herself, Ellen guessed the woman to be one of the humblest class of servants, one of those who get their living by going out to work by the day. She leaned over the bench, and Ellen could see she was praying all the while,

and Ellen wondered how Ned could expect this poor woman, earning a humble wage in humble service, to cultivate what he called "the virtue of pride." Was it not absurd to expect this poor woman to go through life trying to make life "exuberant and triumphant?" And Ellen wished she could show Ned this poor woman waiting to go into the confessional. In the confessional she would find a refined and learned man to listen to her, and he would have patience with her. Where else would she find a patient listener? Where else would she find consolation? "The Gospel of Life," indeed! How many may listen to the gospel of life, and for how long may anyone listen? Sooner or later we are that poor woman waiting to go into the confession; she is the common humanity.

The other penitent was a girl about sixteen. Her hair was not yet pinned up, and her dress was girlish even for her age, and Ellen judged her to be one of the many girls who come up to Dublin from the suburbs to an employment in a shop or in a lawyer's office, and who spend a few pence in the middle of the day in tea rooms. The girl looked round the church so frequently that Ellen could not think of her as a willing penitent, but as one who had been sent to confession by her father and mother. At her age sensuality is omnipresent, and Ellen thought of the check confession is at such an age. If that girl overstepped the line she would have to confess everything, or face the frightful danger of a bad confession, and that is a danger that few Catholic girls are prepared to face.

The charwoman spent a long time in the confessional, and Ellen did not begrudge her the time she spent, for she came out like one greatly soothed, and Ellen remembered that Ned had once described the soothed look which she noticed on the poor woman's face as "a look of foolish ecstasy, wholly divorced from the intelligence." But what intellectual ecstasy did he expect from this poor woman drifting towards her natural harbour—the poor house?

It was extraordinary that a man so human as Ned was in many ways should become so inhuman the moment religion was mentioned, and she wondered if the sight of that poor woman leaving the confessional would allay his hatred of the sacrament. At that moment the young girl came out. She hurried away, and Ellen went into the confessional to betray her husband.

She was going to betray Ned, but she was going to betray him under the seal of confession, and entertained no thought that the priest would avail himself of any technicality in her confession to betray her. She was, nevertheless, determined that her confession should be technically perfect. She went into the confessional to confess her sins, and one of the sins she was going to confess was her culpable negligence regarding the application of her money. There were other sins. She had examined her conscience, and had discovered many small ones. She had lost her temper last night, and her temper had prevented her from saying her prayers, her temper and her

love of Ned; for it were certainly a sin to desire anything so fervidly that one cannot give to God the love, the prayers that belong to Him.

During Mass the life of her soul had seemed to her strange and complex, and she thought that her confession would be a long one; but on her knees before the priest her soul seemed to vanish, and all her interesting scruples and phases of thought dwindled to almost nothing—she could not put her soul into words. The priest waited, but the matter on which she had come to consult him had put everything else out of her head.

"I am not certain that what I am going to tell you is a sin, but I consider it as part of my confession," and she told him how she had given Ned her money and allowed him to apply it without inquiring into the application. "Since my child was born I have not taken the interest I used to take in politics. I don't think my husband is any longer interested in my ideas, and now he has told me that some kind of religious reformation is necessary in Ireland."

"When did he tell you that?"

"Yesterday—the day before. I went to the station to meet him and he told me as we walked home. For a long time I believed him: I don't mean that he told me falsehoods; he may have deceived himself. Anyhow he used to tell me that though his agitation might be described as anti-clerical no one could call it anti-religious. But this morning something led me

into his room and I looked through his papers. I daresay I had no right to do so but I did."

"And you discovered from his papers that his agitation was directed against religion?"

Ellen nodded.

"I cannot think of anything more unfortunate," said the priest.

Father Brennan was a little fat man with small eyes and a punctilious deferential manner, and his voice was slightly falsetto.

"I cannot understand how your husband can be so unwise. I know very little of him, but I did not think he was capable of making so grave a mistake. The country is striving to unite itself, and we have been uniting, and now that we have a united Ireland, or very nearly, it appears that Mr. Carmady has come from America to divide us again. What can he gain by these tactics? If he tells the clergy that the moment Home Rule is granted an anti-religious party will rise up and drive them out of the country, he will set them against Home Rule, and if the clergy are not in favour of Home Rule who, I would ask Mr. Carmady, who will be in favour of it? And I will ask you, my dear child, to ask him—I suggest that you should ask him to what quarter he looks for support."

"Ned and I never talk politics; we used to, but that is a long time ago.

"He will only ruin himself. But I think you said you came to consult me about something."

"Yes. You see a very large part of my money is

spent in politics and I am not certain that I should not withdraw my money. It is for that I have come to consult you."

Ellen had been addressing the little outline of the priest's profile, but when he heard the subject on which she had come to consult him he turned and she saw his large face, round and mottled. A little light gathered in his wise and kindly eyes, and Ellen guessed that he had begun to see his way out of the difficulty, and she was glad of it, for she reckoned her responsibility at a number of souls. The priest spoke very kindly, he seemed to understand how difficult it would be for her to tell her husband that she could not give him any more money unless he promised not to attack the clergy or religion, but she must do so. He pointed out that to attack one was .to attack the other, for the greater mass of mankind understands religion only through the clergy.

"You must not only withdraw your money," he said, " but you must use your influence to dissuade him."

" I am afraid," said Ellen, " that when I tell him that I must withdraw my money, and that you have told me to do so—"

" You need not say that I told you to do so."

" I cannot keep anything back from my husband. I must tell him the whole truth," she said. " And when I tell him everything, I shall not only lose any influence that may remain, but I doubt very much if my husband will continue to live with me."

" But your marriage was a love marriage ?"

"Yes, but that is a long time ago. It is four years ago."

"I don't think your husband will separate himself from you, but even so I think—"

"You will give me absolution?"

She said this a little defiantly, and the priest wondered, and she left the confessional perplexed and a little ashamed and very much terrified.

There was nothing for her to do in Dublin, she must go home and wait for her husband. He was not coming home until evening, and she rode home wondering how the day would pass, thinking the best time to tell him would be after dinner when he left the piano. If he were very angry with her she would go to her room. He would not go on living with her, she was sure of that, and her heart seemed to stand still when she entered the house and saw the study door open and Ned looking through the papers.

"I have come back to look for some papers," he said. "It is very annoying. I have lost half the day," and he went on looking among his papers and she could see that he suspected nothing. "Do you know when is the next train?"

She looked out the trains for him, and she could see that he suspected nothing, and after he had found the papers he wanted they went into the garden.

She talked of her flowers with the same interest as she had done many times before, and when he asked her to go for a walk with him on the hill she consented, although it was almost unbearable

to walk with him for the last time through the places where they had walked so often, thinking that their lives would move on to the end unchanged; and they walked about the hill talking of Irish history, their eyes often resting on the slender outlines of Howth, until it was time for Ned to go to the station.

"I shall be back in time for dinner. You will wait dinner a little for me, I may have to come back by a later train."

And they walked down the hill together, Ned bidding her good-bye at the garden gate, saying she had walked enough that day, and she feeling the moment was at hand.

"But, Ned, why are you going to Dublin? You are only going to see people who are anti-Catholic, who hate our religion, who are prejudiced against it."

"But," he said, "why do you talk of these things. We have got on very much better since we have ceased to discuss politics together. We are agreed in everything else."

She did not answer for a long while and then she said :—

"But I don't see how we are to avoid discussing them, for it is my money that supports the agitation."

"I never thought of that. So it is. Do you wish to withdraw it ?"

"You are not angry with me, Ned ? You won't think it mean of me to withdraw my money ? How are you going to go on without my money ? You see I am wrecking your political career."

"Oh," he said. "I shall be able to get on without it. Now, goodbye."

"May I go to the station with you."

"If you like, only let us talk of something else. Everyone's conscience is his own law and you must act accordingly."

She trotted by his side, and she begged of him not to laugh at her when he said that to be truly logical she would have to turn him out of the house, or at least to charge him for his board and lodging.

The intonation of his voice laid her heart waste; she felt she was done for, and she walked home repeating the words, "I am done for."

As she passed through her garden she saw that her flowers were dying for want of water, and she gave them a few cans of water; but she could not do much work, and though the cans were heavy, they were not as heavy as her heart. She sat down under the apple tree and remembered her life. Her best days were her school days. Then life was beginning. Now it seemed to her nearly over, and she only five-and-twenty. She never could take the same interest in politics as she had once taken, nor in books. She felt that her intelligence had declined. She was cleverer as a girl than she was as a woman.

Ned was coming home for dinner, and some time that evening she would have to tell him that she had read his manuscript. She would have liked to meet him at the station, but thought it would be better not to go. The day wore away. Ned was in his best

humour, and when she told him why she did not go to the station to meet him, he said it was foolish of her not to have come, for there was nothing he liked better than to stroll home with her in the evening, the road was so pleasant, etc.

She could see that he had not noticed her dress or what he was eating, and it was irritating to see him sitting there with his spoon full of soup telling her how the Irish people would have to reduce their expenditure and think a little less of priests—for a while, at least—unless they were minded to pass away, to become absorbed in America.

"I like Brennan," he said, throwing himself back in his chair. "He is a clever man. Brennan knows as well as I do there's too much money spent upon religion in Ireland. But, tell me, did he tell you explicitly that you should give me no more money?"

"Yes. But, Ned——"

"No, no, I am not in the least angry," he said, "I shall always get money to carry on politics. But what a game it is! And I suppose, Ellen, you consult him on every detail of your life?"

Her admission that Father Brennan had taken down books and put on his spectacles delighted him.

"Taking down tomes!" he said. "Splendid! Some of these gentlemen would discuss theology with God. I can see Father Brennan getting up: 'Sire, my reason for entering the said sin as a venial sin, etc.'"

Very often during the evening the sewing dropped

from her hands, and she sat thinking. Sooner or later she would have to tell Ned she had read his manuscript. He would not mind her reading his manuscript, and though he hated the idea that anyone should turn to a priest and ask him for his interpretation regarding right and wrong, he had not, on the whole, been as angry as she had expected.

At last she got up. "I am going to bed, Ned."

"Isn't it very early?"

"There is no use my stopping here. You don't want to talk to me; you'll go on playing till midnight."

"Now, why this petulancy, Ellen? I think it shows a good deal of forgiveness for me to kiss you after the way you behaved."

She held a long string of grease in her fingers, and was melting it, and when she could no longer hold it in her fingers, she threw the end into the flame.

"I've forgiven you, Ellen. . . You never tell me anything of your ideas now; we never talk to each other, and if this last relation is broken there will be nothing . . . will there?"

"I sought Father Brennan's advice under the seal of confession, that was all. You don't think that——"

"There are plenty of indirect ways in which he will be able to make use of the information he has got from you."

"You have not yet heard how it happened, and perhaps when you do you will think worse of me. I went into your room to see what books you were

reading. There was no harm in looking at a book; but you had put the books so far into the book-case that I could not see the name of the author. I took up the manuscript from the table and glanced through it. I suppose I ought not to have done that: a manuscript is not the same as a book. And now good-night."

He imagined her going slowly up the stairs and knew she would not expect him. Well, the sensual coil was broken, and if he did not follow her now she would understand that it was broken. He had wanted freedom this long while. They had come to the end of the second period, and there are three—a year of mystery and passion, and then some years of passion without mystery. The third period is one of resignation. The lives of the parents pass into the children, and the mated journey on, carrying their packs. Seldom, indeed, the man and the woman weary of the life of passion at the same time and turn instinctively into the way of resignation like animals. Sometimes it is the man who turns first, sometimes it is the woman. In this case it was the man. He had his work to do, and Ellen had her child to think of, and each must think of his and her task from henceforth. Their tasks were not the same. Each had a different task; she had thrown, or tried to throw, his pack from his shoulders. She had thwarted him, or tried to thwart him. He grew angry as he thought of what she had done. She had gone into his study and read his papers, and she had then betrayed him to a priest. He lay awake thinking

how he had been deceived by Ellen; thinking that he had been mistaken; that her character was not the noble character he had imagined. But at the bottom of his heart he was true to the noble soul that religion could not extinguish nor even his neglect.

She said one day: "Is it because I read your manuscript and told the priest, that you would not come to my room, or is it because you are tired of me?"

"I cannot tell you; and, really, this conversation is very painful. I am engaged upon my work, and I have no thoughts for anything but it."

Another time when he came from the piano and sat opposite to her she raised her eyes from her sewing and sat looking at him, and then getting up suddenly she put her hands to her forehead and said to herself: "I will conquer this," and she went out of the room.

And from that day she did not trouble him with love. She obtained control over herself, and he remembered a mistress who had ceased to love him, and he had persecuted her for a long while with supplication. "She is at one with herself always," he said, and he tried to understand her. "She is one of those whose course through life is straight, and not zig-zag, as mine is." He liked to see her turn and look at the baby, and he said, "That love is the permanent and original element of things, it is the universal substance;" and he could trace Ellen's love of her child in her love of him; these loves were not two loves, but one love. And when walking one

evening through the shadows, as they spoke about the destiny we can trace in our lives, about life and its loneliness, the conversation verged on the personal, and she said, with a little accent of regret, but not reproachfully :

"But, Ned, you could not live with anyone, at least not always. I think you would sooner not live with anyone."

He did not dare to contradict her; he knew that she had spoken the truth; and Ned was sorry he was giving pain to Ellen, for there was no one he would have liked to please better. He regretted that he was what he was, that his course was zig-zag. For a moment he regretted that such a fate should have befallen Ellen. "I am not the husband that would have suited her," he said. . . And then, after a moment's reflection, "I was her instinct; another would not have satisfied her instinct; constancy is not everything. It's a pity I cannot love her always, for none is more worthy of being loved."

They became friends; he knew there was no danger of her betraying him again. Her responsibility ended with her money, and he told her how the agitation was progressing.

"Oh, Ned, if I were only sure that your agitation was not directed against religion I would follow you. But you will never believe in me."

"Yes, I believe in you. Come to Dublin with me; come to the meeting. I'd like you to hear my speech."

"I would like to hear you speak, Ned; but I don't think I can go to the meeting."

They were on their way to the station, and they walked some time without speaking. Then, speaking suddenly and gravely as if prompted by some deep instinct, Ellen said:—

"But if you fail, Ned, you will be an outcast in Ireland, and if that happens you will go away, and I shall never see you again."

He turned and stood looking at her. That he should fail and become an outcast were not at all unlikely. Her words seemed to him like a divination! But it is the unexpected that happens, she said to herself, and the train came up to the station, and he bade her good-bye, and settled himself down in a seat to consider his speech for the last time.

"I shall say everything I dare, the moment is ripe: and the threat to hold out is, that Ireland is becoming a Protestant country. And the argument to use is that the Catholics are leaving because there is no joy in Ireland."

He went through the different sections of his speech introducing the word joy: Is Ireland going to become joyous? She has dreamed long enough among dead bones and ancient formulae. The little stations went by and the train rolled into Harcourt Street. He called a car. He was speaking at the Rotunda.

He was speaking on the depopulation question, and he said that this question came before every other

question. Ireland was now confronted with the possibility that in five-and-twenty years the last of Ireland would have disappeared in America. There were some who attributed the Irish emigration to economic causes: that was a simple and obvious explanation, one that could be understood by everybody; but these simple and obvious explanations are not often, if they are ever the true ones. The first part of Ned's speech was taken up with the examination of the economic causes, and proving that these were not the origin of the evil. The country was joyless; man's life is joyless in Ireland. In every other country there were merry-makings. "You have only to go into the National Gallery" he said, "to see how much time the Dutch spent in merry-makings." All their pictures with the exception of Rembrandt's treated of joyful subjects, of peasants dancing under trees, peasants drinking and singing songs in taverns, and caressing servant girls. Some of their merry-makings were not of a very refined character, but the ordinary man is not refined and in the most refined men there is often admiration and desire for common pleasure. In the country districts Irish life is one of stagnant melancholy, the only aspiration that comes into their lives is a religious one. "Of course it will be said that the Irish are too poor to pay for pleasure, but they are not too poor to spend fifteen millions a year upon religion." He was the last man in the world who would say that religion was not necessary, but if he were right in saying that numbers were

leaving Ireland because Ireland was joyless he was right in saying that it was the duty of every Irishman to spend his money in making Ireland a joyful country. He was speaking now in the interests of religion. A country is antecedent to religion. To have religion you must first have a country, and if Ireland was not made joyful Ireland would become a Protestant country in about twenty-five years. In support of this contention he produced figures showing the rate at which the Catholics were emigrating. But not only were the Catholics emigrating—those who remained were becoming nuns and priests. As the lay population declined the clerics became more numerous. "Now," he said, "there must be a laity. It is a very commonplace thing to say, but this very commonplace truth is forgotten or ignored, and I come here to plead to-day for the harmless and the necessary laity." He knew that these words would get a laugh, and that the laugh would get him at least two or three minutes grace, and these two or three minutes could not be better employed than with statistics, and he produced some astonishing figures. These figures were compiled, he said, by a prelate bearing an Irish name, but whose object in Ireland was to induce Irishmen and Irish women to leave Ireland. This would not be denied, though the pretext on which he wished Irish men and women to leave Ireland would be pleaded as justification. "But of this I shall speak," Ned said, "presently. I want you first to give your attention to the figures which this prelate produced, and

with approbation. According to him there were ten convents and one hundred nuns in the beginning of the century, now there were twelve hundred convents and twenty thousand nuns. The prelate thinks that this is a matter for us to congratulate ourselves on. In view of our declining population I cannot agree, and I regret that prelates should make such thoughtless observations. Again I have to remind you of a fact that cannot be denied, but which is ignored, and it is that a celibate clergy cannot continue the population, and that if the population be not continued the tail of the race will disappear in America in about twenty-five years. . . Not only does this prelate think that we should congratulate ourselves on the fact that while the lay population is decreasing the clerical population is increasing, but he thinks that Ireland should still furnish foreign missions. He came to Ireland to get recruits, to beseech Irishmen and Irishwomen to continue their noble work of the conversion of the world. No doubt the conversion of the world is a noble work. My point now is that Ireland has done her share in this noble work, and that Ireland can no longer spare one single lay Irishman or cleric or any Irishwoman. If the foreign mission is to be recruited it must be recruited at the expense of some other country."

Ned suggested Belgium as the best recruiting ground. But it was the prelate's own business to find recruits, it was only Ned's business to say that Ireland had done enough for the conversion of the

world. And this prelate with the Irish name and cosmopolitan heart, who thought it an admirable thing that the clerical population should increase, while the lay population declined; who, thought that with the declining population Ireland should still send out priests and nuns to convert the world—was no true Irishman. He cared not a jot what became of his country, so long as Ireland continued to furnish him with priests and nuns for the foreign mission. This prelate was willing to bleed Ireland to death to make a Roman holiday. Ireland did not matter to him, Ireland was a speck—Ned would like to have said, a chicken that the prelate would drop into the caldron which he was boiling for the cosmopolitan restaurant; but this would be an attack upon religion, it would be too direct to be easily understood by the audience, and as the words came to his lips he changed the phrase and said, "a pinch of snuff in the Roman snuff box." After this, Ned passed on to perhaps the most important part of his speech—to the acquisition of wealth by the clergy. He said that if the lay population had declined, and if the clerical population had increased, there was one thing that had increased with the clergy, and that was the wealth of the clergy. "I wish the cosmopolitan prelate had spoken upon this subject. I wonder if he inquired how much land has passed into the hands of the clergy in the last twenty years, and how many mortgages the religious hold upon land. I wonder if he inquired how many poultry farms the

nuns and the friars are adding to their convents and their monasteries; and now they are starting new manufactories for weaving—the weaving industry is falling into their hands. And there are no lay teachers in Ireland, now all the teaching is done by clerics. The Church is very rich in Ireland. If Ireland is the poorest country in the world, the Irish Church is richer than any other. All the money in Ireland goes into religion. There is only one other trade that can compete with it. Heaven may be for the laity, but this world is certainly for the clergy."

More money was spent upon religion in Ireland than in any other country. Too much money was spent for the moment in building churches, and the great sums of money that were being spent on religion were not fairly divided. And passing rapidly on Ned very adroitly touched upon the relative positions of the bishops and the priests and the curates. He told harrowing stories of the destitution of the curates, and he managed so well that his audience had not time to stop him. Everything he thought that they could not agree with he sandwiched between things that he knew they would agree with.

Father Murphy stood a little distance on his right, a thick-set man, and as the sentences fell from Ned's lips he could see that Father Murphy was preparing his answer, and he guessed what Father Murphy's answer would be like. He knew Father Murphy to be an adroit speaker, and the priest began in a low key

as Ned had expected him to do. He began by deploring the evils of emigration, and Mr. Carmady deserved their best thanks for attracting popular attention to this evil. They were indebted to him for having done this. Others had denounced the evil, but Mr. Carmady's eloquence had enabled him to do so as well, perhaps even better than it had been done before. He complimented Mr. Carmady on the picturesque manner in which he described the emptying of the country, but he could not agree with Mr. Carmady regarding the causes that had brought about this lamentable desire to leave the fatherland. Mr. Carmady's theory was that the emptying of Ireland was due to the fact that the Irish priests had succeeded in inducing men to refrain from the commission of sin. Mr. Carmady did not reproach the priests with having failed; he reproached them with having succeeded. A strange complaint. The cause of the emigration, which we all agreed in deploring, was, according to Mr. Carmady, the desire of a sinless people for sin. A strange accusation. The people, according to Mr. Carmady, were leaving Ireland because they wished to indulge in indecent living. Mr. Carmady did not use these words; the words he used were "The joy of life," but the meaning of the words were well known.

"No race," he said, "had perhaps ever been libelled as the Irish race had been, but of all the libels that had ever been levelled against it, no libel had ever equalled the libel which he had heard uttered to-day,

that the Irish were leaving Ireland in search of sin.

"They had heard a great deal about the dancing girl, and according to Mr. Carmady it would seem that a nation could save itself by jigging."

"He is speaking very well, from his point of view," said Ned to himself.

Father Murphy was a stout, bald-headed man with small pig-like eyes, and a piece seemed to have been taken from the top of his bony forehead. He was elegantly dressed in broad cloth and he wore a gold chain and he dangled his chain from time to time. He was clearly the well-fed, well-housed cleric who was making, in this world, an excellent living of his advocacy for the next, and Ned wondered how it was that the people did not perceive a discrepancy between Father Murphy's appearance and the theories he propounded. "The idealism of the Irish people," said the priest, "was inveterate," and he settled himself on his short legs and began his peroration.

Ned had begun to feel that he had failed, he began to think of his passage back to America. Father Murphy was followed by a young curate, and the curate began by saying that Mr. Carmady would be able to defend his theories, and that he had no concern with Mr. Carmady's theories, though, indeed, he did not hear Mr. Carmady say anything which was contrary to the doctrine of our "holy religion." Father Murphy had understood Mr. Carmady's speech in quite a different light, and it seemed to the

curate that he, Father Murphy, had put a wrong interpretation upon it; at all events he had put one which the curate could not share. Mr. Carmady had ventured, and, he thought, very properly, to call attention to the number of churches that were being built and the number of people who were daily entering the orders. He did not wish to criticise men and women who gave up their lives to God, but Mr. Carmady was quite right when he said that without a laity there could be no country. In Ireland the clergy were apt to forget this simple fact that celibates do not continue the race. Mr. Carmady had quoted from a book written by a priest in which the distinguished author had said he looked forward to the day when Ireland would be one vast monastery, and the curate agreed with Mr. Carmady that no more foolish wish had ever found its way into a book. He agreed with Mr. Carmady that a real vocation is a rare thing. No country had produced many painters or many sculptors or many poets, and a true religious vocation was equally rare. Mr. Carmady had pointed out that although the population had diminished the nuns and priests had increased, and Father Murphy must hold that Ireland must become one vast monastery, and the laity ought to become extinct, or he must agree with Mr. Carmady that there was a point when a too numerous clergy would overbalance the laity.

Altogether an unexpected and plucky little speech, and long before it closed Ned saw that Father

Murphy's triumph was not complete. Father Murphy's face told the same tale.

The curate's argument was taken up by other curates, and Ned began to see he had the youth of the country on his side.

He was speaking at the end of the week at another great meeting, and received even better support at this meeting than he had done at the first, and he returned home wondering what his wife was thinking of his success. But what matter? Ireland was waking from her sleep. . . The agitation was running from parish to parish, it seemed as if the impossible were going to happen, and that the Gael was going to be free.

The curates had grievances, and he applied himself to setting the inferior clergy against their superiors, and as the agitation developed he told the curates that they were no better than ecclesiastical serfs, that although the parish priests dozed in comfortable arm chairs and drank champagne, the curates lived by the wayside and eat and drank very little and did all the work.

One day at Maynooth it was decided that curates had legitimate grievances, and that the people had grievances that were likewise legitimate. And at this great council it was decided that the heavy marriage fees and the baptismal fees demanded by the priests should be reduced. Concessions were accompanied by threats. Even so it required all the power of the Church to put down the agitation. Everyone

stood agape, saying the bishops must win in the end. An indiscretion on Ned's part gave them the victory. In a moment of excitement he was unwise enough to quote John Mitchel's words "that the Irish would be free long ago only for their damned souls." A priest wrote to the newspapers pointing out that after these words there could be no further doubt that it was the doctrine of the French Revolution that Mr. Carmady was trying to force upon a Christian people. A bishop wrote saying that the words quoted were fit words for Anti-Christ. After that it was difficult for a priest to appear on the same platform and the curates whose grievances had been redressed deserted, and the fight became an impossible one.

Very soon Ned's meetings were interrupted, disagreeable scenes began to happen, and his letters were not admitted to the newspapers. A great solitude formed about him.

"Well," he said one morning, "I suppose you have read the account in the paper of my ignominious escape. That is what they called it."

"The wheel," Ellen said, "is always going round. You may be at the bottom now, but the wheel is going round, only there is no use opposing the people in their traditions, in their instinct. . . And whether the race is destined to disappear or to continue it's certain that the last Gael will die a Catholic."

"And the Red Indian will die with the scalp at his girdle."

"We won't talk about religion, we'll talk about

things we are agreed upon. I have heard you say yourself that you would not go back to America again, that you never enjoyed life until you came here."

"That was because I met you, Ellen."

"I have heard you praise Ireland as being the most beautiful and sympathetic country in the world."

"It is true that I love these people, and I wish I could become one of them."

"You would become one of them and yet you would tear them to pieces because they are not what you want them to be."

Sometimes he thought he would like to write "A Western Thibet," but he was more a man of action than of letters. His writings had been so long confined to newspaper articles that he could not see his way from chapter to chapter. He might have overcome the difficulty, but doubt began to poison his mind. "Every race," he said, "has its own special genius. The Germans have or have had music. The French and Italians have or have had painting and sculpture. The English have or have had poetry. The Irish had, and alas! they still have their special genius, religious vocation."

He used to go for long walks on the hills, and one day, lying in the furze amid the rough grass, his eyes following the course of the ships in the bay, he said: "Was it accident or my own fantastic temperament that brought me back from Cuba?" It seemed as if a net had been thrown over him and he had been

drawn along like a fish in a net. "For some purpose," he said. "But for what purpose? I can perceive none, and yet I cannot believe that an accident brought me to Ireland and involved me in the destiny of Ireland for no purpose."

And he did not need to take the book from his pocket, he knew the passage well, and he repeated it word for word while he watched the ships in the bay.

"We were friends and we have become strangers "one to the other. Ah, yes; but it is so, and we do "not wish to hide our strangerhood, or to dis- "semble as if we were ashamed of it. We are "two ships each with a goal and a way; and our ways "may draw together again and we may make holiday "as before. And how peacefully the good ships used "to lie in the same harbour, under the same sun; "it seemed as if they had reached their goal, and it "seemed as if there was a goal. But soon the mighty "sway of our tasks laid on us as from of old sundered "and drove us into different seas and different zones; "and it may be that we shall never meet again and it "may be that we shall meet and not know each "other, so deeply have the different seas and suns "changed us. The law that is over us decreed that "we must become strangers one to the other; and for "this we must reverence each other the more, and "for this the memory of our past friendship become "more sacred. Perhaps there is a vast invisible curve "and orbit and our different goals and ways are

"parcel of it, infinitesimal segments. Let us uplift "ourselves to this thought! But our life is too short "and our sight too feeble for us to be friends except "in the sense of this sublime possibility. So, let us "believe in our stellar friendship though we must be "enemies on earth."

"A deep and mysterious truth," he said, "I must go, I must go," he said to himself. "My Irish life is ended. There is a starry orbit and Ireland and I are parts of it, 'and we must believe in our stellar friendship though we are enemies upon earth.'"

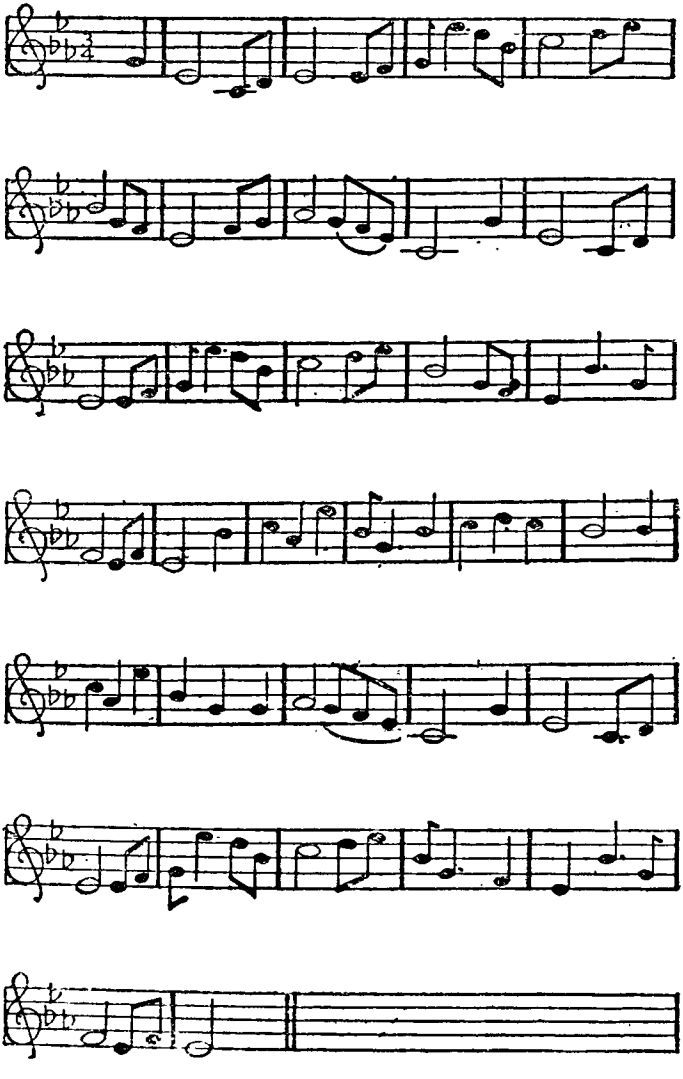
He wandered about admiring the large windless evening and the bright bay. Great men had risen up in Ireland and had failed before him, and it were easy to account for their failure by saying they were not close enough to the tradition of their race, that they had just missed it, but some of the fault must be the fault of Ireland. . . The anecdote varies, but substantially it is always the same story: The interests of Ireland sacrificed to the interests of Rome.

There came a whirring sound, and high overhead he saw three great birds flying through the still air, and he knew them to be wild geese flying south. . .

War had broken out in South Africa, Irishmen were going out to fight once again; they were going to fight the stranger abroad when they could fight him at home no longer. The birds died down on the horizon, and there was the sea before him, bright and beautiful, with ships

passing into the glimmering dusk, and among the hills a little mist was gathering. He remembered the great pagans who had wandered over these hills before scapulars and rosaries were invented. His thoughts came in flashes, and his happiness grew intense. He had wanted to go and the birds had shown him where he might go. His instinct was to go, he was stifling in Ireland. He might never find the country he desired, but he must get out of Ireland, "a mean ineffectual atmosphere," he said, "of nuns and rosaries."

A mist was rising, and the lovely outlines of Howth reminded him of pagan Ireland; "they're like music," he said, and he thought of Usheen and his harp. "Will Usheen ever come again?" he said. "Better to die than to live here." The mist thickened—he could see Howth no longer. "The land is dolorous," he said, and as if in answer to his words the most dolorous melody he had ever heard came out of the mist. "The wailing of an abandoned race," he said. "This is the soul-sickness from which we are fleeing." And he wandered about calling to the shepherd, and the shepherd answered, but the mist was so thick in the hollows that neither could find the other. After a little while the shepherd began to play his flute again; and Ned listened to it singing it after him, and he walked home quickly, and the moment he entered the drawingroom he said to Ellen "Don't speak to me; I am going to write something down," and this is what he wrote:—

THE WILD GOOSE.

"A mist came on suddenly, and I heard a shepherd playing this folk tune. Listen to it. Isn't it like the people? Isn't it like Ireland? Isn't it like everything that has happened? It is melancholy enough in this room, but no words can describe its melancholy on a flute played by a shepherd in the mist. It is the song of the exile; it is the cry of one driven out in the night—into a night of wind and rain. It is night, and the exile on the edge of the waste. It is like the wind sighing over bog water. It is a prophetic echo and final despair of a people who knew they were done for from the beginning. A mere folk tune, mere nature, raw and unintellectual; and these raw folk tunes are all that we shall have done: and by these, and these alone, shall we be remembered."

"Ned," she said at last, "I think you had better go away. I can see you're wearing out your heart here."

"Why do you think I should go? What put that idea into your head?"

"I can see you are not happy."

"But you said that the wheel would turn, and that what was lowest would come to the top."

"Yes, Ned, but sometimes the wheel is a long time in turning, and maybe it would be better for you to go away for a while."

He told her that he had seen wild geese on the hill.

"And it was from you I heard about the wild geese. You told me the history of Ireland, sitting on a druid stone?"

"You want to go, Ned? And the desire to go is as strong in you as in the wild geese."

"Maybe; but I shall come back, Ellen."

"Do you think you will, Ned? How can you if you go to fight for the Boers?"

"There's nothing for me to do here. I want new life. It was you who said that I should go."

"For five years you have been devoted to Ireland, and now you and Ireland are separated like two ships."

"Yes, like two ships. Ireland is still going Romeward, and Rome is not my way."

"You are the ship, Ned, and you came to harbour in Ireland. But you and I are like two ships that have lain side by side in the harbour, and now——"

"And now what, Ellen?" Go on!"

' It seemed to me that we were like two ships."

"That is the very thing I was thinking on the hills. The comparison of two ships rose up in my mind on the hill, and then I remembered a passage." And when he had repeated it she said—

"So there is no hope for us on earth. We are but segments of a starry curve, and must be content with our stellar friendship. But, Ned, we shall never be enemies on earth. I am not your enemy, and never shall be. So we have nothing to think of now but our past friendship. The memory of our past—is all that remains? And it was for that you left America after the Cuban war? There is our child. You love the little boy, don't you, Ned?"

"Yes," he said, "I love the little boy. . . . But you'll bring him up a Catholic. You'll bring him up to love the things that I hate."

"Let there be no bitterness between us to-night, Ned dear. Let there be only love. If not love, affection at least. This is our last night."

"How is that?"

"Because, Ned, when one is so bent upon going as you are it is better he should go at once. I give you your freedom. You can go in the morning or when you please. But remember, Ned, that you can come back when you please, that I shall be always glad to see you."

They went upstairs and looked for some time on the child, who was sleeping. Ellen took him out of his bed, and she looked very pretty, Ned thought, holding the half awakened child, and she kept the little quilt about him so that he might not catch cold.

He put his hands into his eyes and looked at his father, and then hid his face in his mother's neck, for the light blinded him and he wished to go to sleep.

"Let me put him back in his bed," Ned said, and he took his son and put him back, and he kissed him. As he did so he wondered how it was that he could feel so much affection for his son and at the same time desire to leave his home.

"Now, Ned, you must kiss me, and do not think I am angry with you for going. I know you are dull here, that you have got nothing further to do in Ireland, but it will be different when you come back."

"And is it possible that you aren't angry with me, Ellen, for going?"

"I am sorry you are going, Ned—in a way, but I should be more sorry to see you stay here and learn to hate me."

"You are very wise, Ellen. But why did you read that manuscript?"

"I suppose because God wished me to."

One thing Ireland had done for him, and for that he would be always grateful to Ireland—Ireland had revealed a noble woman to him; and distance would bring a closer and more intimate appreciation of her.

He left early next morning before she was awake in order to save her the pain of farewells, and all that day in Dublin he walked about, possessed by the great joyful yearning of the wild goose when it rises one bright morning from the warm marshes, scenting the harsh north through leagues of air, and goes away on steady wing-beats. But he did not feel he was a free soul until the outlines of Howth began to melt into the grey drift of evening. There was a little mist on the water, and he stood watching the waves tossing in the mist thinking that it were well that he had left home—if he had stayed he would have come to accept all the base moral coinage in circulation; and he stood watching the green waves tossing in the mist, at one moment ashamed of what he had done, at the next overjoyed that he had done it.

THE WAY BACK.

THE WAY BACK.

IT was a pleasure to meet, even when they had nothing to say, and the two men stopped to talk.

"Still in London, Rodney."

"Yes, till the end of the week; and then I go to Italy. And you? You're going to meet Sir Owen Asher at Marseilles."

"I am going to Ireland," and, catching sight of a look of astonishment and disapproval on Rodney's face, Harding began to explain why he must return to Ireland.

"The rest of your life is quite clear," said Rodney. "You knew from the beginning that Paris was the source of all art, that everyone here who is more distinguished than the others has been to Paris. We go to Paris with baskets on our backs, and sticks in our hands, and bring back what we can pick up. And having lived immersed in art till you're forty, you return to the Catholic Celt! Your biographer will be puzzled to explain this last episode, and, however he may explain it, it will seem a discrepancy."

"I suppose one should think of one's biographer," and they laughed and talked of a time when everybody would choose his biographer and live accordingly.

"It will be more like yourself to get Asher to land you at one of the Italian ports. We'll go to

Perugia and see Raphael's first frescoes, done when he was sixteen, and the town itself climbing down into ravines. The streets are lonely at midday, but towards evening a breeze blows up from both seas—Italy is very narrow there—and the people begin to come out; and from the battlements one sees the lights of Assisi glimmering through the dusk."

"I may never see Italy. Go on talking. I like to hear you talk about Italy."

"There are more beautiful things in Italy than in the rest of the world put together, and there is nothing so beautiful as Italy. Just fancy a man like you never having seen the Campagna. I remember opening my shutters one morning in August at Frascati. The poisonous mists lay like clouds, but the sun came out and shone through them, and the wind drove them before it, and every moment a hill appeared, and the great aqueducts, and the tombs, and the wild grasses at the edge of the tombs waving feverishly; and here and there a pine, or group of pines with tufted heads, like Turner used to draw. . . . The plain itself is so shapely. Rome lies like a little dot in the middle of it, and it is littered with ruins. The great tomb of Cecilia Metella is there, built out of blocks of stone as big as an ordinary room. He must have loved her very much to raise such a tomb to her memory, and she must have been a wonderful woman." Rodney paused a moment and then he said, "The walls of

the tombs are let in with sculpture, and there are seats for wayfarers, and they will last as long as the world—they are everlasting."

"Of one thing I'm sure," said Harding. "I must get out of London. I can't bear its ugliness any longer."

The two men crossed Piccadilly, and Harding told Rodney Asher's reason for leaving London.

"He says he is subject to nightmares, and lately he has been waking up in the middle of the night thinking that London and Liverpool had joined. Asher is right. No town ought to be more than fifty miles long. I like your description of Perugia. Every town should be walled round, now we trail into endless suburbs."

"But the Green Park is beautiful, and these evening distances!"

"Never mind the Green Park, come and have a cup of tea. Asher has bought a new picture. I'd like to show it to you. But," said Harding, "I forgot to tell you that I met your model."

"Lucy Delaney? Where?"

"Here, I met her here," said Harding, and he took Rodney's arm so that he might be able to talk to him more easily. "One evening, a week ago, I was loitering, just as I was loitering to-day, and it was at the very door of St. James's Hotel that she spoke to me."

"How did she get to London? and I didn't know that you knew her."

" A girl came up suddenly and asked me the way to the Gaiety Theatre, and I told her, adding, however, that the Gaiety Theatre was closed. 'What shall I do?' I heard her say, and she walked on; I hesitated and then walked after her. 'I beg your pardon,' I said, 'the Gaiety Theatre is closed, but there are other theatres equally good. Shall I direct you?' 'Oh, I don't know what I shall do. I have run away from home. . . . I have set fire to my school and have come over to London thinking that I might go on the stage.' She had set fire to her school! I never saw more winning eyes. But she's a girl men would look after, and not liking to stand talking to her in Piccadilly, I asked her to come down Berkeley Street. I was very curious to know who was this girl who had set fire to her school and had come over to London to go on the stage; and we walked on, she telling me that she had set fire to her school so that she might be able to get away in the confusion. I hoped I should not meet anyone I knew, and let her prattle on until we got to the Square. The Square shone like a ballroom with a great plume of green branches in the middle and every corner a niche of gaudy window boxes. Past us came the season's stream of carriages, the women resting against the cushions looking like finely cultivated flowers. The beauty of the Square that afternoon astonished me. I wondered how it struck Lucy. Very likely she was only thinking of her Gaiety Theatre!"

" But how did you know her name?"

"She told me in the Square. You remember it was at the corner of Berkeley Square that Evelyn Innes stood when she went to see Owen Asher for the first time. She used to tell me how she stood at the curb watching London passing by her, thinking that one day London would be going to hear her sing. As soon as there was a break in the stream of carriages I took Lucy across. We could talk unobserved under the trees."

"I'm nearly seventeen," she said, "and I was sent back to school because I sat for a sculpture."

"What did you sit for?"

"For a statue of the Blessed Virgin, and a priest told on me."

"Then you're Lucy Delaney, and the sculptor you sat for is John Rodney, one of my intimate friends."

"What an extraordinary coincidence," said Rodney. "I never thought that Lucy would stay in Ireland. Go on with your story."

"When I found out who she was there seemed no great harm in asking her in to have some tea. Asher will forgive you anything if there's a woman in it; you may keep him waiting half an hour if you assure him your appointment was with a married woman. Well, Lucy had arrived that morning in London with threepence in her pocket, so I told the footman to boil a couple of eggs. I should have liked to have offered her a substantial meal, but that would have set the servants talking. Never did a girl eat with a better appetite, and when she had finished a second plateful of buttered toast she began to notice the

pictures. I could see that she had been in a studio and had talked about art. It is extraordinary how quick a girl is to acquire the ideas of a man she likes. She admired Manet's picture of Evelyn, and I told her Evelyn's story—knowing it would interest her. 'That such a happy fate should be a woman's and that she should reject it,' her eyes seemed to say. 'She is now,' I said, 'singing Ave Marias at Wimbledon for the pecuniary benefit of the nuns and the possible salvation of her own soul.' . . What a model you had in Lucy. Her walk tells the length of the limbs and the balance of the body, and my eyes followed her as she moved about the room, and when I told her I had seen the statue and had admired the legs, she turned and said, with a pretty pleased look, that you always said that she had pretty legs. When I asked her if you had made love to her, she said you had not, that you were always too busy with your sculpture."

"One can't think of two things at the same time. If I had met her in Paris it would have been different."

"Unfortunately I was dining out that evening. It was hard to know what to do. At last I thought of a lodginghouse kept by a praiseworthy person, and took her round there and, cursing my dinner party, I left her in charge of the landlady."

"Like a pot of jam left carefully under cover. How well I can see you going away saying: 'that will be all right till to-morrow.'"

"Very likely. It is humiliating to admit it, but it is so; the substance of our lives is woman; all other

things are irrelevancies, hypocrisies, subterfuges. We sit talking of sport and politics, and all the while our hearts are filled with memories of women and plans for the capture of women. Consciously or unconsciously we regard every young woman from the one point of view. 'Will she do?' You know the little look that passes between men and women as their hansoms cross? Do not the eyes say: 'Yes, yes, if we were to meet we might come to an understanding?' And I'm sure that when we don't look round through the side windows the woman is disappointed. She looks in the glass and says, 'I can't be looking my best to-day.' That night at my dinner party, while talking to wise mammas and their more or less guileless daughters, I thought of the disgrace if it were found out that I had picked up a girl in the street and put her in charge of the landlady."

"But one couldn't leave her to the mercy of the street."

"Quite so; but I'm speaking now of what was in the back of my mind."

"The pot of jam carefully covered up," said Rodney, laughing.

"Yes, the pot of jam; and while talking about the responsibilities of Empire, I was thinking that I might send out for a canvas in the morning and sketch something out on it; and when I got home I looked out a photograph of some women bathing. I expected her about twelve, and she found me hard at work.

"'Oh, I didn't know that you were a painter,' she said.

"'No more I am now, but I used to be; and thinking of Rodney's statue and what I can see of you through that dress I thought I'd try and do something like you.'

"'I'm thinner than that.'

"'You're not thin.'

"We argued the point, and I tried to persuade her to give me a sitting. She broke away, saying that it wasn't the same thing, and that she had sat for you because there were no models in Dublin. 'You've been very good to me,' she said, 'I should have had to sleep in the Park last night if it had not been for you. Do continue to be good to me and get me on the stage, for if you don't I shall have to go back to Dublin or to America.' 'America,' I said. 'Do you want to go to America?' She didn't answer, and when she was pressed for an answer, she said: 'Well, all the Irish go to America, I didn't mean anything more; I am too worried to know what I am saying,' and then, seeing me turn round to look at my picture, she said, 'I will sit to you one of these days, but I am too unhappy and frightened now. I don't like saying no; it is always disagreeable to say no.' And seeing it would give her no pleasure to sit, I did not ask her again."

"I'm sorry; you missed seeing something very beautiful."

"I daresay she'd have sat if I'd have pressed her,

but she was under my protection, and it seemed cowardly to press her, for she could not refuse. Suddenly we seemed to have nothing more to say to each other, and I asked her if she'd like to see a manager, and as it seemed a pity she should waste herself on the Gaiety Theatre I took her to see Sir Edward Higgins. The mummer was going out to lunch with a lord and could only think of the people he was going to meet. So we went to Dorking's Theatre, and we found Dorking with his acting manager. The acting manager had been listening for a long while and wasn't sorry for the interruption. But we had not been talking for more than two or three minutes when the call-boy brought in a bundle of newspaper cuttings, and the mummer had not the patience to wait until he was alone—one reads one's cuttings alone—he stuck his knees together and opened the bundle, columns of print flowed over his knees, and after telling us what the critics were saying about him, mention was made of Ibsen, and we wondered if there was any chance of getting the public to come to see a good play. You know the conversation drifts."

"You couldn't get her an engagement," said Rodney, "I should have thought she was suited to the stage."

"If there had been time I could have done something for her; she's a pretty girl, but you see all these things take a long time, and Lucy wanted an engagement at once. When we left the Theatre

I began to realize the absurdity of the adventure, and the danger to which I was exposing myself. I, a man of over forty, seeking the seduction of a girl of seventeen—for that is the plain English of it. We walked on side by side, and I asked myself, 'what am I to her, what is she to me?' But one may argue with oneself for ever."

"One may indeed," said Rodney, laughing, "one may argue, but there is that law that is over us."

"Well, the law that is over us compelled me to take her to lunch, and she enjoyed the lunch and the great restaurant. 'What a number of butlers,' she said. After lunch the same problem confronted me: Was I or was I not going to pursue the adventure? I only knew for certain that I could not walk about the streets with Lucy. She is a pretty girl, but she looked odd enough in her country clothes. Suddenly it struck me that I might take her into the country, to Wimbledon."

"And you took her there and heard Evelyn Innes sing. And what did Lucy think? A very pretty experiment in experimental psychology."

"The voice is getting thinner. She sang Stradella's *Chanson D'Eglise*, and Lucy could hardly speak when we came out of church. 'Oh, what a wonderful voice,' she said, 'do you think she regrets?' 'Whatever we do we regret,' I answered, not because I thought the observation original, but because it seemed suitable to the occasion; 'and we regret still more what we don't do.' And I asked myself if I should write to Lucy's

people as we walked about the Common. But Lucy wanted to hear about Owen Asher and Evelyn, and the operas she had sung, and I told the story of Tannhauser and Tristan. She had never heard such stories before, and, as we got up from the warm grass, she said that she could imagine Evelyn standing in the nuns' garden with her eyes fixed on the calm skies, getting courage from them to persevere. Wasn't it clever of her? We dined together in a small restaurant and I spent the evening with her in the lodginghouse; the landlady let us her sittingroom. Lucy is charming, and her happiness is volatile and her melancholy too; she's persuasive and insinuating as a perfume; and, when I left the house, it was as if I had come out of a moonlight garden. 'Thy green eyes look upon me . . . I love the moonlight of thine eyes.'"

"Go on," said Rodney "what happened after that?"

"The most disagreeable thing that ever happened to me in my life. You don't know what it is to be really afraid. I didn't until a fellow came up to me at the club and asked me if I had seen the detectives. Fear is a terrible thing, Rodney, there is nothing so demoralising as fear. You know my staid old club of black mahogany and low ceilings, where half a dozen men sit dining and talking about hunting and two-year-olds. There is a man in that club who has asked me for the last ten years what I am going to do with my two-year-olds. He cannot remember that I never had a two-year-old. But that

night he wasn't tipsy, and his sobriety impressed me; he sat down at my table, and after a while he leaned across and asked me if I knew that two detectives had been asking after me. 'You had better look to this. These things turn out devilish unpleasantly. Of course there is nothing wrong, but you don't want to appear in the police court,' he said."

"Had she told?"

"She was more frightened than I was when I told her what had happened, but she had done the mischief nevertheless. She had written to her people saying that she had met a friend of Mr. Rodney, and that he was looking after her, and that he lived in Berkeley Square; she was quite simple and truthful, and notwithstanding my fear I was sorry for her, for we might have gone away together somewhere, but, of course, that was impossible now, her folly left no course open to me except to go to Dublin and explain everything to her parents."

"I don't see," said Rodney, "that there was anything against you."

"Yes, but I was judging myself according to inward motives, and for some time I did not see how admirable my conduct would seem to an unintelligent jury. There is nothing to do between London and Holyhead, and I composed the case for the prosecution and the case for the defence and the judge's summing up. I wrote the articles in the newspapers next day and the paragraphs in the evening papers: . . I had met her at the corner of Berkeley Street and

she had asked me the way to the Gaiety Theatre; and, being anxious for her safety, I had asked her why she wanted the Gaiety Theatre, for of course if the case came to trial I should not have approved of the Gaiety, and my disapproval would have won all the Methodists. The girl had told me that she had set fire to her school, and an excitable girl like that would soon be lost—I don't know what expression the newspapers would use—'in the labyrinths of London vice,' she was just the kind of girl that a little good advice might save from ruin. She had told me that she knew you, I was her only friend, etc. What could I do better than to take her to a lodging-house where I had lodged myself and put her in charge of the landlady? The landlady would be an important witness, and I think it was at Rugby Junction that I began to hear the judge saying I had acted with great discretion and kindness, and left the court without a stain upon my character. Nevertheless, I should have appeared in a police court on a charge of abducting a girl, a seventeen year old maiden; and not everyone would be duped by outward appearances, many would have guessed the truth, and, though we're all the same, every one tries to hide the secret of our common humanity. But I had forgotten to ask Lucy for the address. I only knew the name, and that the Delaneys were cheese-mongers, so I had to call on every cheese-monger called Delaney. My peregrinations were too absurd. 'Have you got a daughter? Has she

left you and gone to London?' And that all day in one form or another, for it was not until evening that I found the Delaneys I was seeking. The shop was shutting up, but there was a light in the passage, and one of the boys let me in and I went up the narrow stairs."

"I know them," said Rodney.

"And the room—"

"I know it," said Rodney.

"The horse-hair chairs full of holes."

"I know the rails," said Rodney, "they catch you about here, across the thighs."

"The table in the middle of the room; the smell of the petroleum lamp and the great chair—"

"I know," said Rodney, "the Buddah seated! An enormous head! The smoking cap and the tassel hanging out of it!"

"The great cheeks hanging and the little eyes, intelligent eyes, too, under the eye-brows, the only animation in his face. He must be sixteen stone!"

"He is eighteen."

"The long clay pipe and the fat hands with the nails bitten."

"I see you have been observing him," said Rodney.

"The brown waistcoat with the white bone buttons, curving over the belly, and the belly shelving down into the short fat thighs, and the great feet wrapped in woollen slippers!"

"He suffers terribly, and hardly dares to stir out of

that chair on account of the stone in the bladder, which he won't have removed."

"How characteristic the room seemed to me," said Harding. "The piano against the wall near the window."

"I know," said Rodney, "Lucy used to sit there playing. She plays beautifully."

"Yes, she plays very well."

"Go on," said Rodney, "what happened?"

"You know the mother, the thin woman with a pretty figure and the faded hair and the features like Lucy's?"

"Yes."

"I had just begun my little explanation about the top of Berkeley Square, how a girl came up to me and asked me the way to the Gaiety Theatre, when this little woman rushed forward and, taking hold of both my hands, said: 'We are so much obliged to you; and we do not know how to thank you.' A chair was pushed forward—"

"Which chair," said Rodney. "I know them all. Was it the one with the hole in the middle, or was the hole in the side?"

"'If it hadn't been for you,' said Mrs. Delaney, 'I don't know what would have happened.' 'We've much to thank you for,' said the big man, and he begged to be excused for not getting up. His wife interupted him in an explanation regarding his illness, and gradually I began to see that, from their point of view, I was Lucy's saviour, a white Knight,

a modern Sir Galahad. They hoped I had suffered no inconvenience when the detectives called at the Club. They had communicated with Scotland Yard, not because they suspected me of wishing to abduct their daughter, but because they wished to recover their daughter, and it was important that she should be recovered at once, for she was engaged to be married to a mathematical instrument maker who was on his way from Chicago; he was expected in a few days; he was at that moment on the Atlantic, and if it had not been for my admirable conduct, Mrs. Delaney did not know what story she could have told Mr. Wainscott."

"So Lucy is going to marry a mathematical instrument maker from Chicago?"

"Yes," said Harding, "and she is probably married to him by now. It went to my heart to tell her that her mother was coming over to fetch her, and that the mathematical instrument maker would arrive early next week. But I had to tell her these unpleasant things, for I could not take her away in Owen Asher's yacht, her age and the circumstances forebade an agreeable episode amid the Greek Islands. She is charming . . . Poor Lucy! She slipped down on the floor very prettily and her hair fell on my knees. 'It isn't fair, you're going away on a yacht, and I am going to Chicago.' And when I lifted her up she sat upon my knees and wept. 'Why don't you take me away,' she said. 'My dear Lucy, I'm forty and you're seventeen.' Her eyes grew enigmatic. 'I shall never live with him,' she said.

"Did you kiss her?"

"We spent the evening together and I was sorry for her."

"But you don't know for certain that she married Wainscott."

"Yes. Wainscott wrote me a letter," and after some searching in his pockets Harding found the letter.

"'DEAR SIR—Mr. and Mrs. Delaney have told me of your kindness to Lucy, and Lucy has told me of the trouble you took trying to get her an engagement, and I write to thank you. Lucy did not know at the time that I had become a partner in the firm of Sheldon and Flint, and she thought that she might go on the stage and make money by singing, for she has a pretty voice, to help me to buy a partnership in the business of Sheldon and Flint. It was a kind thought. Lucy's heart is in the right place, and it was kind of you, sir, to take her to different managers. She has given me an exact account of all you did for her.

"'We are going to be married to-morrow, and next week we sail for the States. I live, sir, in Chicago City, and if you are ever in America Lucy and myself will esteem it an honour if you will come to see us.

"'Lucy would write to you herself if she were not tired, having had to look after many things.

"'I am, dear sir,

"'Very sincerely yours,

"'JAMES WAINSCOTT.'"

"Lucy wanted life," said Rodney, "and she will find her adventure sooner or later. Poor Lucy!"

"Lucy is the stuff the great women are made of, and will make a noise in the world yet."

"It is well she has gone; for it is many years since there was honour in Ireland for a Grania."

"Maybe you'll meet her in Paris and will do another statue from her."

"It wouldn't be the same thing. Ah! my statue, my poor statue. Nothing but a lump of clay. I nearly went out of my mind. At first I thought it was the priest who ordered it to be broken. But no, two little boys who heard a priest talking. They tell strange stories in Dublin about that statue. It appears that, after seeing it, Father McCabe went straight to Father Brennan, and the priests sat till midnight, sipping their punch and considering this fine point of theology—if a man may ask a woman to sit naked to him; and then if it would be justifiable to employ a naked woman for a statue of the Virgin, Father Brennan said 'Nakedness is not a sin,' and Father McCabe said: 'Nakedness may not be in itself a sin, but it leads to sin, and is therefore unjustifiable.' At their third tumbler of punch they had reached Raphael, and at the fourth Father McCabe held that bad statues were more likely to excite devotional feelings than good ones, bad statues being further removed from perilous Nature."

"I can see the two priests, I can hear them. If an exception be made in favour of the Virgin would the

sculptor be justified in employing a model to do a statue of a saint."

"No one supposes that Rubens did not employ a model for his descent from the Cross," said Rodney.

"A man is different, that's what the priests would say."

"Yet, that slender body, slipping like a cut flower into women's hands, has inspired more love in woman than the Virgin has in men."

"I can see these two obtuse priests. I can hear them. I should like to write the scene," said Harding.

The footman brought in the tea, and Harding told him that if Mr. Carmady called he was to show him in, and it was not long after that a knock came at the front door.

"You have come in time for a cup of tea, Carmady. You know Rodney?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Carmady used to come to my studio. Many's the talk we've had about the possibility of a neo-pagan Celtic renaissance. But I did not know you were in London. When did you arrive?"

"Yesterday. I'm going to South Africa. There's fighting going on there, and it is a brand new country."

"Three Irishmen meet," said Rodney; "one seeking a country with a future, one seeking a country with a past, and one thinking of going back to a country without past or future."

"Is Harding going back to Ireland?" said Carmady.

"Yes," said Rodney. "You tried to snuff out the Catholic candle, but Harding hopes to trim it."

"I'm tired of talking about Ireland. I've talked enough."

"This is the last time, Carmady, you'll be called to talk about Ireland. We'd like to hear you."

"There is no free thought, and where there is not free thought there is no intellectual life. The priests take their ideas from Rome cut and dried like tobacco and the people take their ideas from the priests cut and dried like tobacco. Ireland is a terrifying example of what becomes of a country when it accepts prejudices and convention and ceases to inquire out the truth."

"You don't believe," said Harding, "in the possibility of a Celtic renaissance—that with the revival of the languages?"

"I do not believe in Catholics. The Catholic kneels like the camel, that burdens may be laid upon him. You know as well as I do, Harding, that the art and literature of the 15th and 16th centuries were due to a sudden dispersal, a sudden shedding of the prejudices and conventions of the middle ages; the renaissance was a joyous returning to Hellenism, the source of all beauty. There is as little free love in Ireland as there is free thought; men have ceased to care for women and women to care for men. Nothing thrives in Ireland, but the celibate, the priest, the nun and the ox. There is no unfaith and the violence of the priest is against any sensual trangression. A girl marries at once or becomes a nun—a free girl is a

danger. There is no courtship, there is no walking out, and the passion which is the direct inspiration of all the world's music and art is reduced to the mere act of begetting children."

"Love books his passage in the emigrant ship," said Rodney. "You speak truly. There are no bastards in Ireland; and the bastard is the outward sign of inward grace."

"That which tends to weaken life is the only evil, that which strengthens life the only good, and the result of this puritanical Catholicism will be an empty Ireland."

"Ireland has always struck me," said Rodney, "as a place that God had intended to do something with; but he changed his mind, and that change of mind happened about a thousand years ago. Since then the Gael has been wasting."

"The Gael will be remembered," said Carmady, "if he is remembered, by his little folk tunes. The day before I left Ireland I heard one. The hills were shrouded in mist and I could not find the flute-player; but the tune he played, melancholy enough in itself, sounded in the mist like the death wail of a race. Never did music affect me more profoundly—a little eight-bar tune."

Carmady whistled the melody and Rodney said:

"Melancholy as bog-water and, like the Gael, melancholy and ineffective."

"Then you think there is no hope for Ireland," said Carmady.

"Yes, if you could remove America. But that would be a big undertaking. Why this fuss? The Gael was only intended to do a little, and that little he did in the tenth century. Since then he has produced an incredible number of priests and policemen, some fine prize-fighters and some clever lawyers; but nothing more serious. He is really a very unimportant person, and he knows it. Has he not sloughed his language and booked his passage? A race is wise in its instinct. My dear Harding, you sit there brooding and looking very cross. But the Tara brooch and Cormac's chapel are not much; every European race has done more, and you know it. Come to Italy and I'll show you a city no bigger than Rathmines, in which Michael Angelo, Donatello, Del Sarto and Da Vinci lived, and contemporaneously. The poor Catholic Celt! What have these great pagans left him to do. And now, in the last hour! The time has gone by; everything has been done, and gloriously. Ireland is too far north. Sculpture does not get farther north than Paris—oranges and sculpture! the orange zone and its long cigars, cigars eight inches long, a penny each, and lasting the whole day. They are lighted from a taper that is passed round in the cafés. The fruit that one can buy for three halfpence, enough for a meal. And the eating of the fruit by the edge of the canal—seeing beautiful things all the while. But, Harding, you sit there saying nothing. Before you came in, Carmady, I was telling Harding

that he was not acting fairly towards his biographer. The biographer will not be able to explain this Celtic episode satisfactorily. Only a Balzac could make it convincing."

And Rodney laughed loudly, saying that he could imagine a man refraining from any excess that might disturb and perplex or confuse his biographer.

"How did the Celtic idea come to you, Harding? Do you remember?"

"Yes, I remember very well. One day looking across a park with a view of the mountains in the distance, I perceived a pathetic beauty in the country itself that I had not perceived before; and a year afterwards I was driving about the Dublin mountains, and met two women on the road; there was something pathetic and wistful about them, something dear, something intimate, and I felt drawn towards them. I felt I should like to live among these people again. There is a proverb in Irish which says that no man ever wanders far from his grave sod. We are thrown out, and we circle a while in the air, and return to the feet of the thrower. But what astonished me is the interest that everybody takes in my departure. Everyone seems agreed that nothing could be more foolish, nothing more mad. But if I were to go to meet Asher at Marseilles, and cruise with him in the Greek Islands, and go on to Cairo, and spend the winter talking to wearisome society, everyone would consider my conduct most rational. You, my dear

friend, Rodney, you tempt me with Italy and conversations about yellowing marbles; and you won't be angry with me when I tell you that all your interesting utterances about the Italian renaissance would not interest me half so much as what Paddy Durkin and Father Pat will say to me on the roadside."

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